

Borough Council of  
**King's Lynn &  
West Norfolk**



# **Homelessness: A Review**

February 2024  
Draft

Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

The Homelessness Review provides an overview of homelessness experience and provision in King's Lynn and West Norfolk. It looks at:

- The **current and future levels of homelessness** in the borough,
- The **available provision of services** for people experiencing or facing homelessness,
- The **ability of such services to meet current and future demand**.

The review has been carried out in the autumn and winter of 2023/24, with extensive input from council officers, partner agencies and people with lived experience of homelessness.

The council last produced a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy in January 2020. By law, the council is required to produce a renewed strategy every five years. The need for a refreshed strategy is timely, given the acute pressures faced by homeless households and the services supporting them. The Homelessness Review lays the foundation for developing an effective strategy: led by data and supported by professional and lived experience.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Current homelessness trends

The council reports that homelessness presentations, per quarter, have doubled during the lifetime of the last strategy. Data shows no single cause for this increase, but shows an increase in:

The proportion of homelessness presentations arising from **Private Rented tenancies** ending.

The proportion of homelessness presentations arising from **people fleeing domestic abuse**.

The proportion of **households with children** making homeless presentations.

The proportion of homelessness households where **at least one member is in employment**.

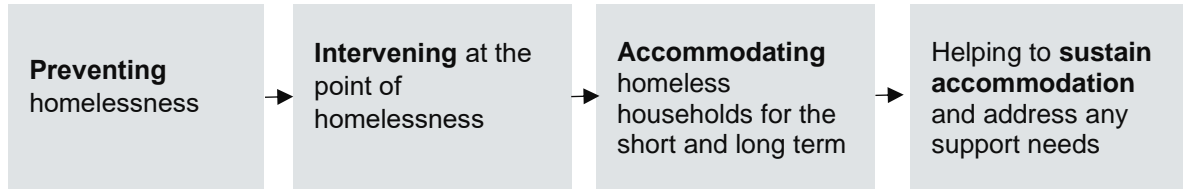
Data shows that the council's effectiveness in preventing homelessness has improved since the publication of the last strategy, but has ebbed away over the last two years, due (in part) to cost-of-living pressures and the overheating of the private rented sector (PRS).

The council provided a substantial data set towards the review; partners were able to identify trends that corroborated this data. They also reported that homeless applicants displayed a greater level of support needs – particularly, mental health and substance misuse. Council officers reported difficulties accessing adequate levels of support for such applicants.

The council has gathered data over the last three years to track its progress towards ending rough sleeping. Council data shows that the level of people found sleeping rough in any given month, since Autumn 2020, has been steady, with some seasonal fluctuations. The proportion of people sleeping rough in the borough (per 100,000 population) is lower than most other local authorities in the region. Nevertheless, partners describe a cohort of people who are neither sleeping rough nor adequately housed, who need support to find and sustain accommodation.

## Current provision of services

Within the borough, the council and partners provide a wide range of support to people who are homeless or facing homelessness. This includes services aimed at:



Since the publication of the last strategy, local provision has been influenced by:

<b>The COVID-19 pandemic and 'Everyone In'</b>	including a funded programme to (1) bring people sleeping rough into a place of safety and (2) assist them to move into suitable longer-term housing.
<b>A period of relative funding stability</b>	with core government-funded services benefitting from three years of financial support.
<b>A period of wider economic instability</b>	resulting in food and fuel poverty and an overheated PRS market.
<b>The council's own strategic planning</b>	which meant that the council was able to deliver programmes such as Housing First rapidly, once funding was available.

## Evaluation of services

The council talked to external partners and to homeless applicants to evaluate the strength of the services provided by the partnership. The council has used the following 'pillars', in line with government strategies and national good practice, in its evaluation:

- **Prevention** of homelessness and rough sleeping.
- **Intervention** to assess and accommodate people without a home.
- **Accommodation** that is suitable and sustainable for all applicants.
- **Recovery** to address underlying support needs.
- **Systems support** to provide processes and partnerships to underpin the above.

The evaluation included a detailed questionnaire sent to partners, as well as group sessions with service providers and service users. A more detailed evaluation can be found in section 5, but some of the key strengths, challenges and gaps are as follows:

Strengths	Challenges	Gaps
Partnership working to prevent homelessness, with emphasis on customer empowerment.	Prevention does not always happen early enough, limiting chances of success.	Limited access to financial tools and resources including staffing.
Effective outreach service. Diverse 'off-the-street' offer for people sleeping rough.	Overuse of expensive bed and breakfast / nightly-paid accommodation.	Lack of specialist mental health and substance use outreach.
Good relationship with some private sector (PRS) landlords; Housing First for higher needs.	Lack of social / affordable accommodation, partly due to high levels of void properties.	Access to PRS (including cost); insufficient high needs housing e.g. Housing First.
A strong focus on wellbeing. Some good links with services such as Steam Café.	Mixed levels of effectiveness with clients, especially those with higher support needs.	Lack of "in-tenancy support" and recovery specialisms such as Dual Diagnosis.
A flexible culture with an emphasis on communication and information sharing.	Recruitment and retention of staff. Effective "join-up" of multiple working groups. Further embedding of trauma-informed practice.	Co-production with people with lived experience. Consortium funding bids.

While some service users were able to speak positively about the help they received, others expressed difficulties accessing homelessness advice and support throughout their journey. While the council aims to continually improve its service, respondents perceived a lack of empathy at times, as well as difficulties getting through to their adviser in periods of sickness and short staffing.

More widely, respondents expressed concerns with accessing treatment for substance misuse, transport links to and from their accommodation, and a degree of mistrust in the wider 'system'.

### Future demands and trends

The 2024-2029 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be implemented during a period of uncertainty. Food and fuel prices remain high; the private rented sector continues to shrink; and the borough continues to struggle to attract investment in social and affordable housing.

However, there is considerable opportunity ahead: a new local administration, a possible new national government, legislative changes (such as reforms to private renting and supported housing) and the first signs that the PRS market may be starting to cool. The West Norfolk Housing Company and West Norfolk Property Company, both wholly owned by the council, are well-placed to capitalise on future changes to the local property market.

The Strategy will need to be agile: meeting the changing needs of homeless households and capitalising on potential opportunities – a deliberate set of actions to give the partnership the best chance of success.

### **Next steps**

The review marks the end of the first stage of the strategy process. The council will lead the process of developing the 2024-2029 strategy, but anyone in King's Lynn and West Norfolk is welcome to contribute ideas and resources towards its success. The council aims to approve the new strategy in September 2024, with a launch event to be held shortly afterwards.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Why are we doing this?

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities are required by law to produce a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy once every five years. Before publishing the strategy, housing authorities have the power to carry out a review of homelessness services in their district. The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk ("The council" or "BCKLWN") published its last strategy in January 2020. It aims to publish its next strategy document by the autumn of 2024.

More importantly, the council is conducting this review because so much has changed in the last five years. The UK has left the EU, lived through a global pandemic and responded to both the war in Ukraine and the crisis in Afghanistan. In terms of homelessness: presentations to the council's housing needs service have doubled since the last strategy was published.

The council's Corporate Strategy<sup>1</sup> projects a vision of the borough as "a place where people can thrive". The council will "support the health and wellbeing of our communities, help prevent homelessness, assist people with access to benefits advice and ensure there is equal access to opportunities." To achieve this, residents need housing that is safe, affordable and sustainable.

## 1.2 What do we mean by homelessness?

The Housing Act 1996 defines a person as homeless if they:

- have no accommodation available to occupy, or
- are at risk of violence or domestic abuse, or
- have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy it, or
- have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or
- have no legal right to occupy their accommodation, or
- live in a mobile home or houseboat but have no place to put it or live in it.<sup>2</sup>

During the consultation sessions carried out as part of this review, one participant described homelessness as a "wicked problem" – that is, a social or cultural problem that is difficult to resolve because of its complex and interconnected nature. "The term 'wicked' in this context is used, not in the sense of evil, but rather as an issue highly resistant to resolution."<sup>3</sup> Homelessness is a problem that the council seeks to resolve in partnership, because no agency possesses the skills and resources to resolve homelessness on its own.

## 1.3 What does the review cover?

In line with the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002, the review covers:

- the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in the borough,
- the activities which are carried out for any purpose (towards the prevention and relief of homelessness),

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<sup>1</sup> [Our priorities | Corporate Strategy 2023 - 2027 | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Shelter Legal England - Legal definition of homelessness and threatened homelessness - Shelter England](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Tackling wicked problems : A public policy perspective - APSC \(archive.org\)](#)

- the resources available to the council, the social services authority for their district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for such activities<sup>4</sup>.

The review seeks to identify useful practice, gaps, challenges, opportunities and threats within the borough. **However, the review does not make any recommendations** at this stage as to *how* to address the issues raised.

The review is like the first act of a play, with participants invited to help write the next act – the council’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029.

## 1.4 How was the review carried out?

The review consisted of the following:

- **Data analysis: the council.** The council’s Housing Needs Service records the numbers and demographics of individuals presenting for homelessness assistance. These figures are submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) every quarter. A dataset was produced, using records gathered from April 2019 to June 2023. The council has used this as the basis for much of [section 3](#).
- **Data analysis: partners.** The council also obtained data gathered by its partners, in the form of regular monthly reports and bespoke datasets.
- **Questionnaire: partners.** The council produced a questionnaire, circulated to partners. A reformatted version of this questionnaire is included in Appendix One.
- **Group sessions.** The council facilitated group sessions to review its homelessness provision with over 40 attendees, including:
  - Internal partners (council’s housing option team; other council departments)
  - External partners (accommodation, support, health)
  - People with lived experience of homelessness (single households; households with children. 14 attendees across two sessions).
- **Individual meetings.** The council met with various partner agencies over the course of the review period and has included information gathered from notes taken during these meetings.

The council would like to thank the following external partners for their assistance in carrying out the review:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Benjamin Foundation – Sustainable Housing Partnership Service (SHPS)</li> <li>• Broadland Housing Group</li> <li>• Change, Grow, Live (CGL)</li> <li>• Freebridge Community Housing</li> <li>• Home Group</li> <li>• King’s Lynn Night Shelter</li> <li>• Leeway Domestic Abuse and Advice Services</li> <li>• Money Advice Hub</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norfolk County Council Children’s Services</li> <li>• Norfolk Integrated Housing and Community Support Services (NIHCSS - part of Together UK).</li> <li>• Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust</li> <li>• The Purfleet Trust</li> <li>• Shelter Norfolk</li> <li>• YMCA Norfolk</li> </ul> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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<sup>4</sup> [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Chapter 2: Homelessness strategies and reviews - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities-chapter-2-homelessness-strategies-and-reviews-guidance)



The council gives particular thanks to the Purfleet Trust and Freebridge Community Housing for hosting sessions for people with lived experience of homelessness, as well as those attending for sharing their personal experiences of homelessness.

## **1.5 Reviewing the review – what did we miss?**

Although the council is grateful to its partners for their support, there are areas where we would have benefited from a greater level of input and insight.

In terms of **health and social care**, the review would have benefited from more robust data in terms of numbers of people encountering, for example, emergency medical provision, or adult social care, with a homelessness issue flagged.

As the councils develop its strategy, it intends to engage with **the private sector** - local landlords, businesses, and other organisations – to establish what part they may wish to play in the council's vision for reducing and ending homelessness. The council hears regularly that private rented sector (PRS) landlords are selling their properties but lacks local data to establish their reasons for doing so.

The council were incredibly grateful for the people who participated in our **service user** sessions, for sharing their current and past experiences, including accessing homelessness services. Nevertheless, the council received feedback that the sessions could have been advertised more widely, attracting more attendees.

## 2. ABOUT KING’S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK – IN BRIEF

### 2.1 Geography

King’s Lynn and West Norfolk marks its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a district this year. It is a largely rural local authority area: the second largest by area in England. It contains the two market towns of King’s Lynn and Downham Market, the coastal resort of Hunstanton, and many coastal and countryside villages. As highlighted in the recent Corporate Peer Challenge report<sup>5</sup>, the borough has “enormous potential” with “beautiful sandy beaches [and a] thriving tourist economy”.

King’s Lynn and Downham Market (as well as the village of Watlington) are connected to London and Cambridge by train. The borough is served by a network of bus routes that has grown in recent years, with the locally owned Lynx Bus<sup>6</sup> and Go to Town<sup>7</sup> services having been established in the last decade.

Much of the borough is low-lying, with land having been reclaimed from the sea in previous centuries. According to a National Audit Office report, over 19,000 properties were at risk of flooding in 2020<sup>8</sup>. This has had a knock-on impact on the cost of building and insuring houses, and on the availability of suitable land for development.

### 2.2 Demographics

The borough was home to 154,300 people as at the 2021 Census<sup>9</sup>. The population grew by 4.7% in ten years, compared with 8.3% regionally and 6.6% nationally.

In this period, the borough’s population aged significantly. There was an 18% increase in the number of people aged over 65, with the average age in the borough increasing to 47 from 45. This has had an impact on the size of the labour market locally, as well as the proportion of the population who require additional care. The Census is unclear as to how comparatively healthy the borough is – 44% of the population report “very good” health (well below average) but 37% report “good” health (well above average).

### 2.3 Economics

The 2021 Census reports a significant increase in the proportion of people renting privately. The figure of 18.8% has risen from 14.7% in 2011. As the next section shows, this has contributed towards a significant ‘pressure point’ in terms of the numbers of private renters subsequently facing homelessness. The borough is home to a higher-than-average proportion of people who own their homes outright (41.6%), perhaps reflecting the proportion of people who either retire to the borough or who stay local upon retirement.

The last ten years has seen a slight reduction in the proportion of people employed in the borough – 52.8%, down from 53.8%.

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<sup>5</sup> [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge: Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk | Local Government Association](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Home | Lynx \(lynxbus.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [News | Go To Town \(gtt-online.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Managing flood risk \(nao.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [How life has changed in King’s Lynn and West Norfolk: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

The borough is rated as the 134<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority – just outside the top third. 56% of households are reported to be deprived in at least one dimension.<sup>10</sup>

One of the borough's key areas of deprivation is its level of academic attainment. 23.4% of residents hold no formal qualifications (one of the highest proportions in the country); 23.3% hold a qualification at level 4<sup>11</sup> or above (one of the lowest in the country)<sup>12</sup>. Again, this has an impact on the ability of local employers to recruit and retain skilled staff.

Ultimately, King's Lynn and West Norfolk is a borough of contrasts. While seven of its wards are in the 20% least deprived, nine are in the 20% most deprived – with some of these wards neighbouring each other<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> [Household deprivation - Census Maps, ONS](#)

<sup>11</sup> Equivalent to the first year of an undergraduate degree

<sup>12</sup> [Highest level of qualification - Census Maps, ONS](#)

<sup>13</sup> Due to limitations in the data gathered, we were unable to provide a ward-by-ward breakdown of the proportions of people homeless or under threat of homelessness.

### 3. CURRENT AND FUTURE LEVELS OF HOMELESSNESS

#### 3.1 Volume of approaches

Since the publication of the last Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, demand for the council’s homelessness service has increased significantly:

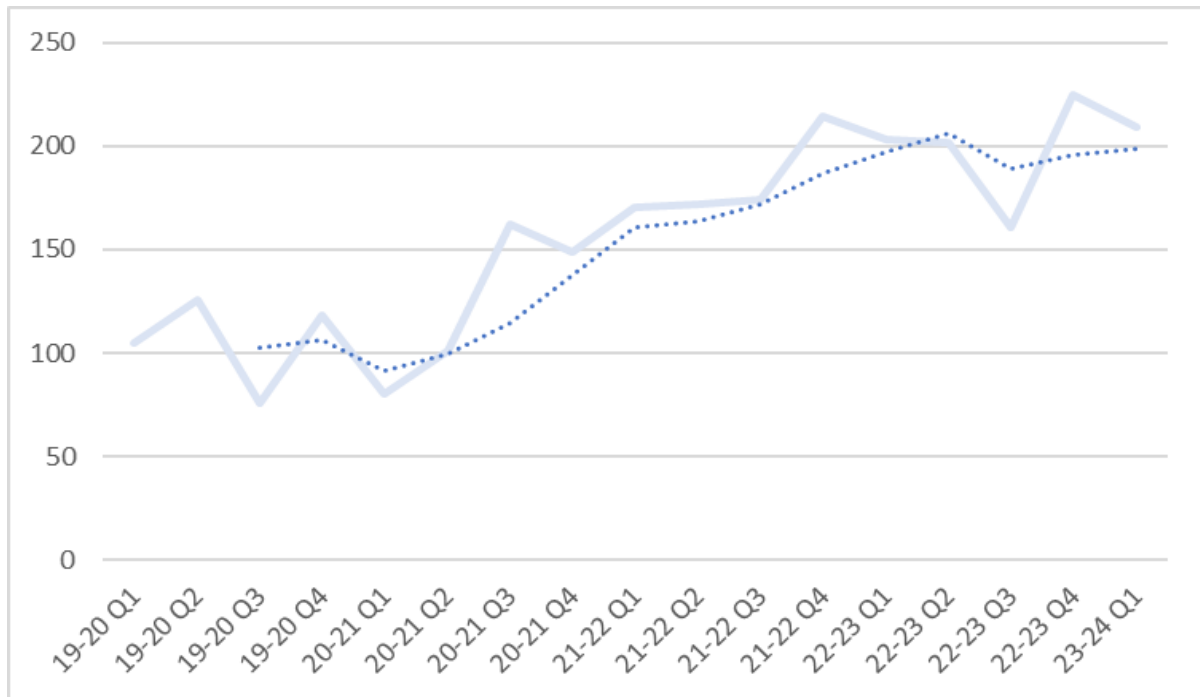


Fig 1. Homelessness applications (by quarter, with three-month trendline) made to BCKLWN. April 2019 to June 2023. BCKLWN

The trendline in Figure 1 shows:

- A relatively steady level of approaches up to the spring of 2020 (coinciding with the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic) – approx. 100 per quarter,
- A steady but significant increase in approaches over the subsequent two years,
- A ‘new normal’ of around 200 approaches per quarter from Spring 2022.

#### 3.2 Reason for approaches

The council records data of the reason for households requiring homelessness assistance. This information is submitted every quarter to DLUHC and published alongside other authorities’ data. The last four years’ data demonstrates a shift in the proportion of homeless households seeking assistance for various reasons:

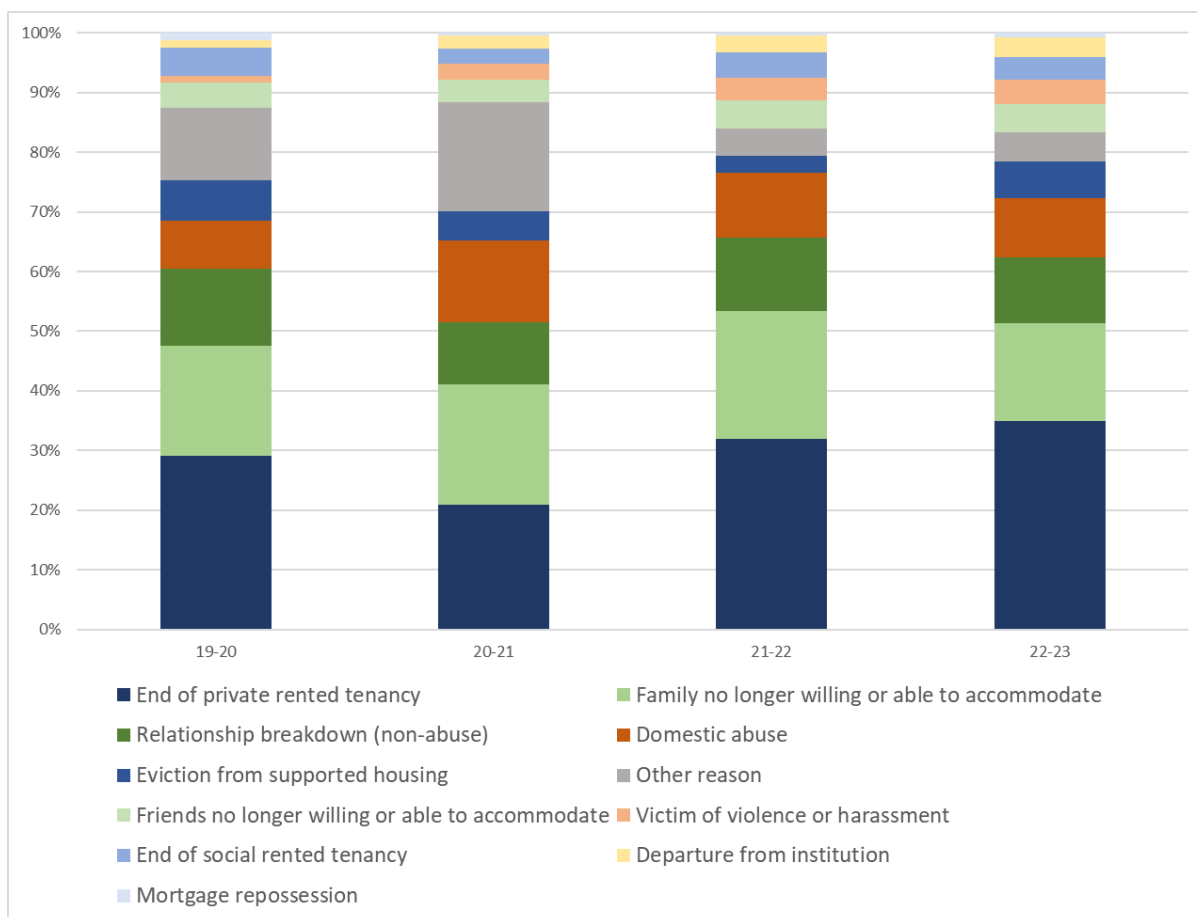


Fig 2. Reason for homelessness approach, by financial year – April 2019 to March 2023. BCKLWN

Considering the increase by 100% in homelessness presentations, one might expect a single driving force behind the change. However, the top three reasons for approach are the same in 2022/23 as they were in 2019/20.

Nevertheless, the data highlights the following trends:

- **End of private rented tenancy:** the proportion of presentations arising from the end of PRS tenancies increased by over 50% in two years. Contributory factors include:
  - **Demand:** as mortgage rates have increased, the ability of renters to buy their own properties has decreased, thus increasing demand for PRS housing. According to Rightmove<sup>14</sup>, “as at October 2023, the number of enquiries from would-be tenants has more than tripled to 25 [per property] from eight at this time in 2019”.
  - **Supply:** At the same time, the national supply of PRS properties has reduced by 35%. Landlords cite “government sentiment towards the industry (48%), rising taxation (41%) and increasing compliance requirements (33%)”<sup>15</sup> as key reasons for selling their properties. Anecdotally, local private landlords have expressed concern about the unintended consequences of the Renters Reform Bill<sup>16</sup>, including the abolition of ‘no-fault’

<sup>14</sup> [Rental-Trends-Tracker-Q3-2023-FINAL.pdf \(rightmove.co.uk\)](#) . NOTE – the Q4 report indicates a slight reduction in demand going into 2024 – 11 per property compared with 14 the previous year – but still almost triple the 2019 figure.

<sup>15</sup> [Rental Trends Tracker: Q2 2023 - Rightmove Hub](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Guide to the Renters \(Reform\) Bill - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Section 21 notices. West Norfolk remains an attractive borough for retirees and second homeowners<sup>17</sup>, impacting on supply.

- **Accessibility:** It has become progressively harder for households to find and sustain PRS accommodation. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) has been frozen since 2020<sup>18</sup>. At the time of writing, there were no family properties advertised in King’s Lynn<sup>19</sup> at LHA rate or below, and just one property within £100 of LHA rate.
- **Domestic abuse:** the proportion of homelessness applications arising from domestic abuse has increased from 8% to 10%:
  - Statistics suggest that whilst the reporting of domestic abuse *crimes* has increased since 2020<sup>20</sup>, the prevalence of domestic abuse *instances* has reduced from 6.1% of the population to 5.1% in the same period<sup>21</sup>.
  - During this period, the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act has given “those who are homeless as a result of domestic abuse priority need for accommodation secured by the local authority” – so that victim-survivors<sup>22</sup> of domestic abuse can access safe accommodation more easily.
  - The new legislation, as well as the introduction of new support services, aims to make services for victim-survivors more accessible.
- **Relationship breakdowns:** the proportion of homelessness applications arising from families being unwilling or unable to accommodate has reduced from 18.5% to 16.5%. Similarly, applications relating to relationship breakdowns have reduced from 13% to 11%.

Although no comparative data is available, one in six homelessness applicants made two or more applications in the period April 2020 to June 2023. One in 27 applicants made three or more applications in the same period. This demonstrates that there is still a cohort of households who experience homelessness repeatedly.

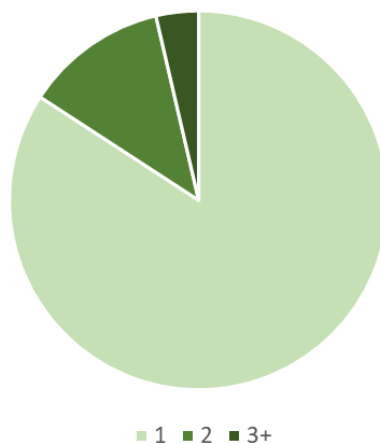


Fig 3. Number of presentations (by NI number of main applicant) – April 2019 to March 2023. BCKLWN

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/dvc1589/secondhomes/index.html>

<sup>18</sup> [Local Housing Allowance | Local Housing Allowance | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/) shows live LHA rates, which are due to increase in April 2024.

<sup>19</sup> [Properties To Rent in King's Lynn | Rightmove](https://www.rightmove.co.uk/property-for-rent/details/123456789) – search identified one two-bed apartment at £75 above LHA rate, and no other 2/3/4 properties within a 5-mile radius of King’s Lynn within £100 of the current LHA rates.

<sup>20</sup> [Domestic Abuse Statistics UK • NCDV](https://www.ncdv.org.uk/)

<sup>21</sup> [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/domesticabuse)

<sup>22</sup> Note – this report uses the term victim-survivor to describe both “someone still recovering from the harm that has come to them [from domestic abuse] and “someone who has gone through the recovery process”. Whilst other organisations may separate the two terms “victim” and “survivor”, the term “victim-survivor” reflects the reality that people who have experienced domestic abuse may be both a victim and a survivor concurrently. This is in line with terminology used by the Norfolk Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.

### 3.3 Timing and outcome of approaches

Council data suggests an increase since the last strategy in terms of the proportion of people seeking help prior to becoming homeless:

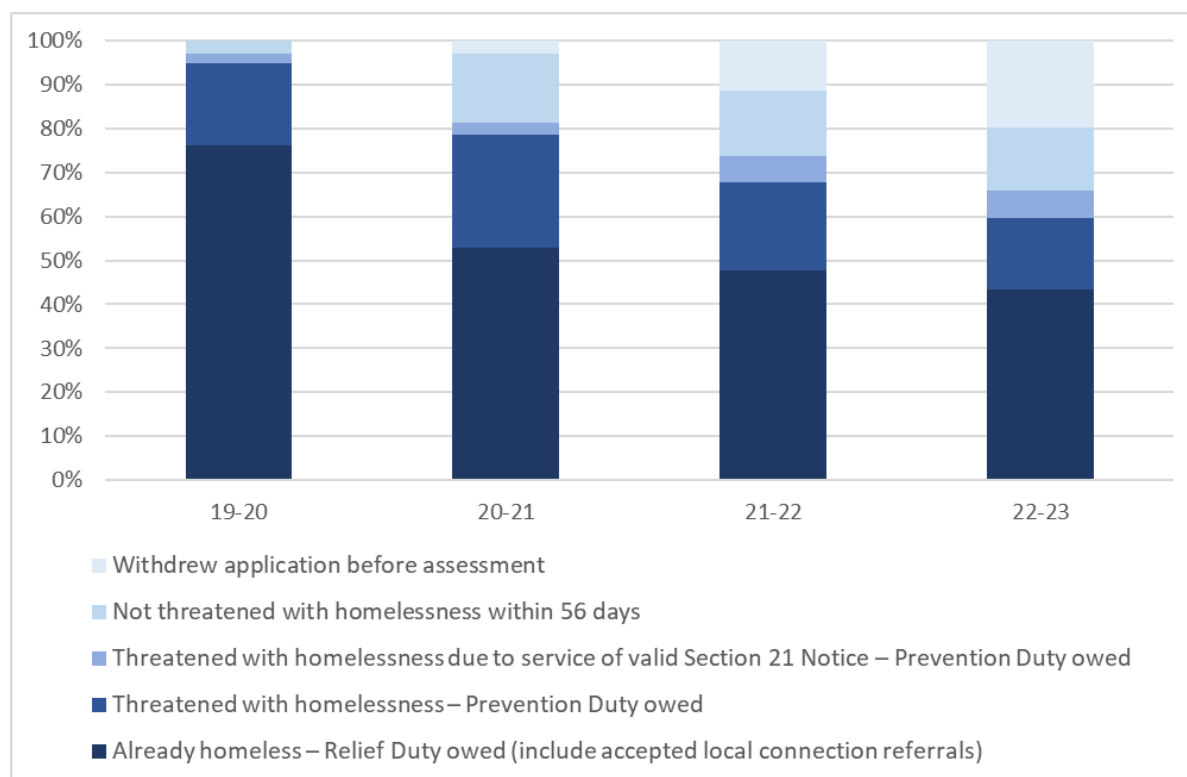


Fig 4. Duty owed at presentation – April 2019 to March 2023. BCKLWN

Figure 4 (above) shows a reduction in the proportion of people approaching as ‘already homeless’ from 76% to 43%. This might reflect the partnership’s focus on homelessness prevention. However, the proportion of people (20% in 22/23) withdrawing their applications before assessment needs investigating further. The above table highlights the growing proportion of homeless applications due to a valid Section 21 notice<sup>23</sup> being issued.

The council’s ability to prevent homelessness has fluctuated over the term of the strategy. Figure 5 (overleaf) shows a significant increase in the proportion of prevention outcomes (from 38% to 67%) between 2019/20 and 2020/21, but a steady reduction since then. This could be due to the following:

- The uplift in LHA rates in April 2020<sup>24</sup> along with the national Everyone In<sup>25</sup> initiative, which gave local authorities improved tools to prevent homelessness.
- The commissioning of homelessness prevention services locally (see [section 4](#)).
- In the last two years, the ‘overheating’ of the PRS market ([as outlined in 3.2](#)) and cost-of-living crisis, which made it more difficult for households to avoid homelessness
- The doubling in homelessness presentations, which made it harder for the council’s housing options team to work preventatively.

<sup>23</sup> [Evicting tenants in England: Section 21 and Section 8 notices - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/evicting-tenants-in-england-section-21-and-section-8-notice)

<sup>24</sup> [Local Housing Allowance \(LHA\) rates applicable from April 2020 to March 2021 - amendment as instructed by The Social Security \(Coronavirus\) \(Further Measures\) Regulations 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-housing-allowance-lha-rates-applicable-from-april-2020-to-march-2021-amendment-as-instructed-by-the-social-security-coronavirus-further-measures-regulations-2020)

<sup>25</sup> [Coronavirus: Support for rough sleepers \(England\) - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-only/housing-and-communities/committee-inquiries/inquiries-and-evidence/2020/coronavirus-support-for-rough-sleepers-england/)

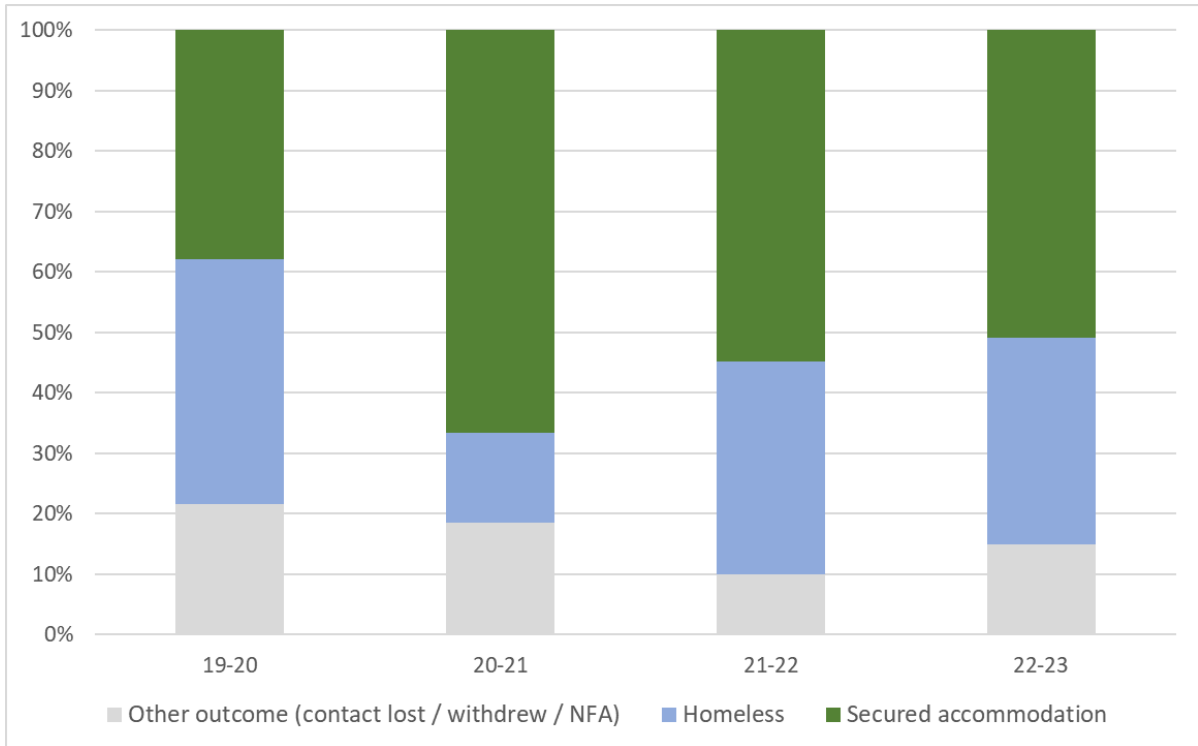


Fig 5. Outcome of Prevention Duty – April 2019 to March 2023. BCKLWN

### 3.4 Demographics of approaches

Council data has identified some changes in the demographics of homeless households. These include:

- **A higher proportion of families approaching:** Figure 6 (below) shows that households with children comprised 39% of applications in 22/23, compared with 28% in 2019/20:

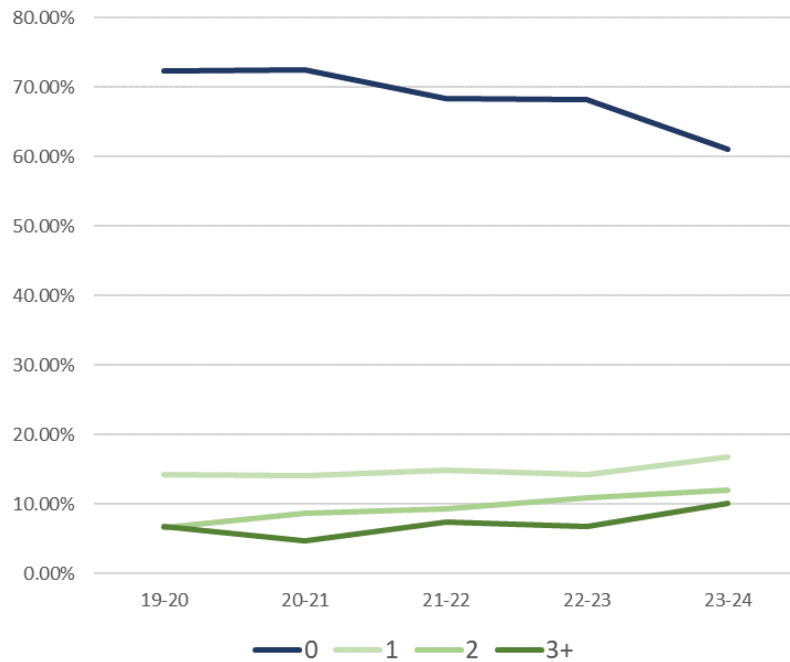


Fig 6. Number of children per homeless applicant – April 2019 to March 2023. BCKLWN



The data did not identify the reason for this change. Possible factors include an increase in cases arising from domestic abuse and the end of PRS tenancies, as well as improved services for single applicants since Everyone In (see [section 4](#) for further details).

The data shows an increase in the proportion of female applicants<sup>26</sup> (53% in 22/23 compared with 48% in 2019/20) and the proportion of female homelessness applicants with children (28% in 22/23 compared with 23% in 2019/20).

- **A lower proportion of young people approaching:** Figure 7 (below) shows that under-25s comprised 17% of applicants in 2022/23, compared with 24% in 2019/20:

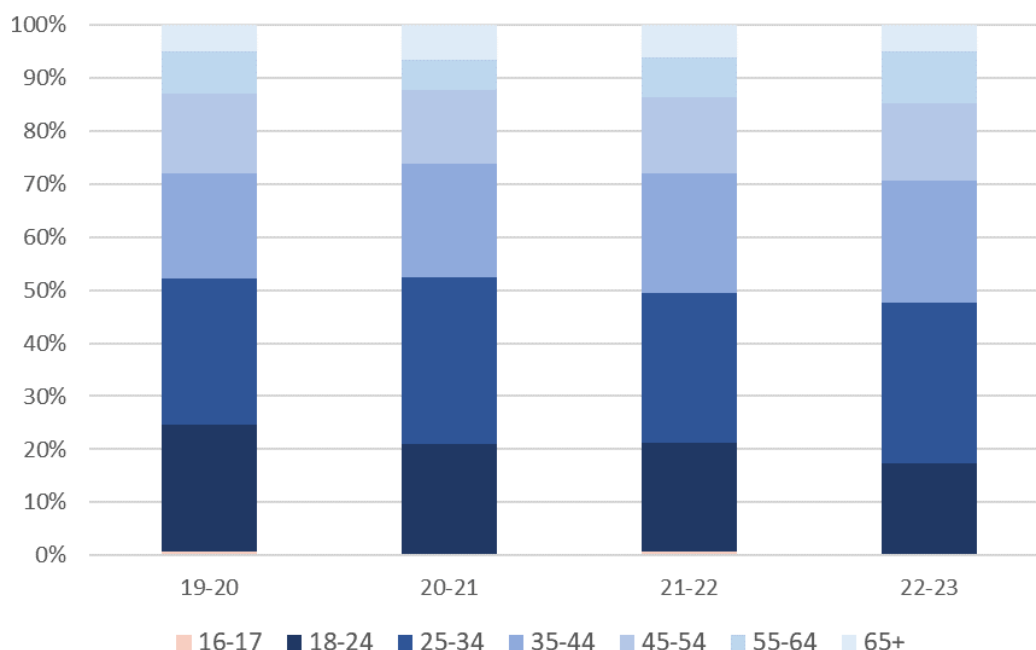


Fig 7. Age profile of homelessness applications – April 2019 to March 2023. BCKLWN

The last four years has seen a near-elimination of applications from 16/17-year-olds (just 0.13% in 22/23), partly due to the development of a countywide protocol for 16/17 years olds facing homelessness.

- **A higher proportion of workers approaching:** Figure 8 (overleaf) shows the proportion of homelessness applicants in work has increased from 19% in 2019/20 to 25% in 2022/23. This includes 16% of applicants in full-time work – almost double the proportion in the same period. The increase could be due to:
  - The tightening of the private rented sector, resulting in ‘first time’ homelessness for some working families.
  - The rise of ‘in-work’ poverty, as evidenced by increasing levels of food instability and foodbank usage amongst workers<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> NOTE: council data records the gender of the *main* applicant in each homeless application but does not easily record the gender of the *second* applicant (where a couple approaches as homeless). Therefore the data may not record the *overall* gender proportion of applicants.

<sup>27</sup> An increase from 1 in 7 [Do working people need food banks? - The Trussell Trust](#) to 1 in 5 [Microsoft Word - EYS UK Factsheet 2022-23\\_FINAL \(trusselltrust.org\)](#)

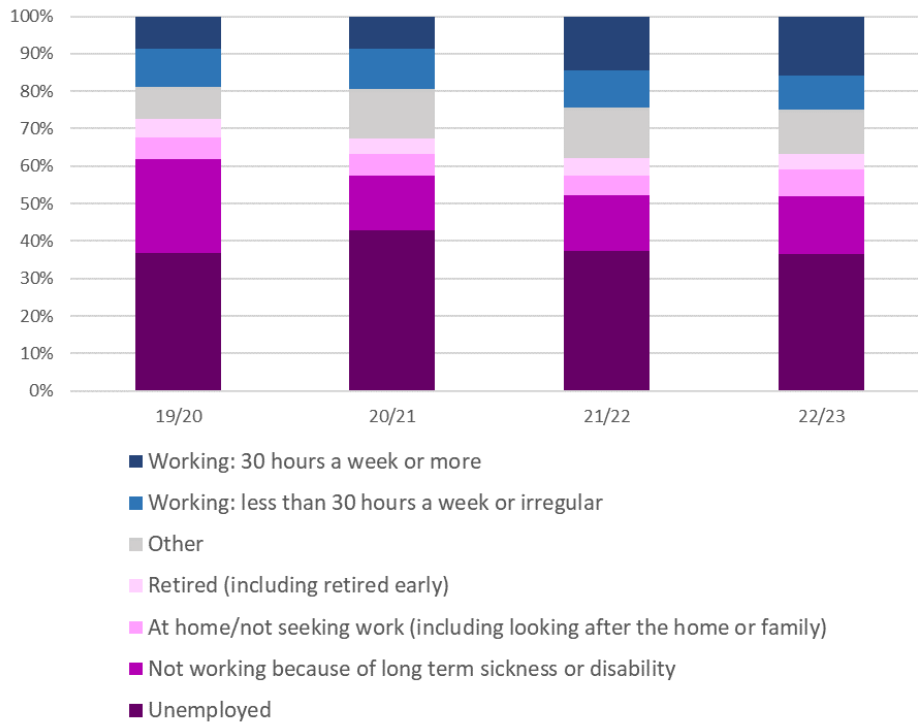


Fig 8. Employment profile of homelessness applications – April 2019 to March 2023. BCKLWN

- **A consistently high level of applicants** with British or Irish citizenship. The number of EEA and other non-UK nationals approaching for assistance has grown steadily, but this is broadly consistent with the changing demographics of the borough:

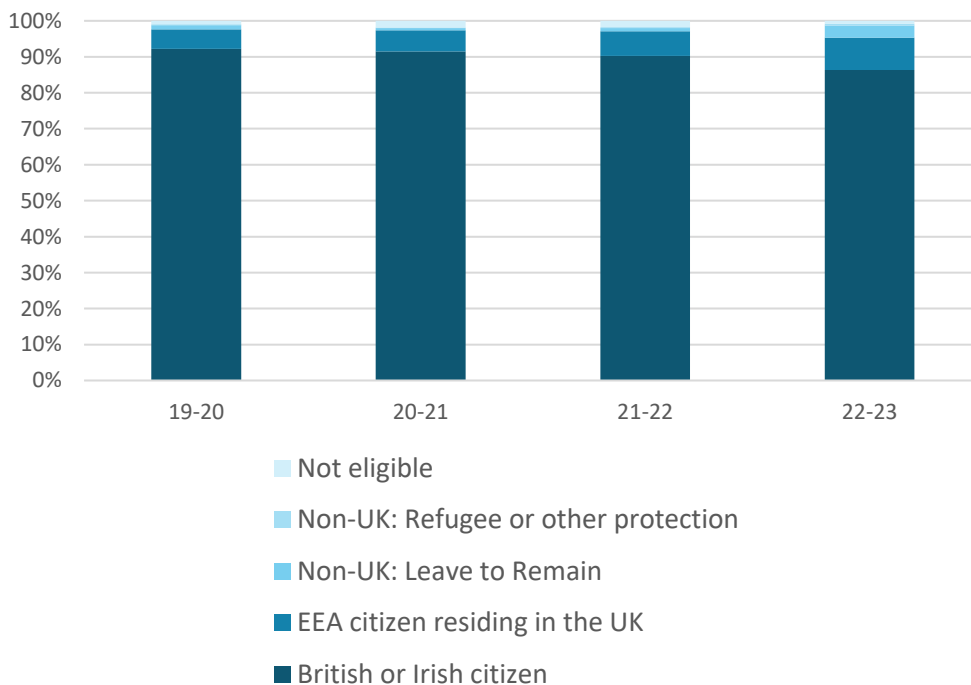


Fig 9. Eligibility profile of homelessness applications – April 2019 to March 2023. BCKLWN

### 3.5 Rough Sleeping

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness. The definition of rough sleeping “includes sleeping outside or, in places that aren't designed for people to live in, including cars, doorways and abandoned buildings”<sup>28</sup>. It excludes people in hostels or shelters, ‘sofa surfers’, squatters and other defined groups with unmet housing needs. The council measures and records the number of people known to be sleeping rough in the borough.

The annual Rough Sleeping autumn snapshot<sup>29</sup> provides the most widely publicised data on rough sleeping. In 2023, the snapshot showed a national increase of 27% - the second increase in succession. Figure 10 (below) shows the borough’s reported snapshot figures from 2010 to 2023:

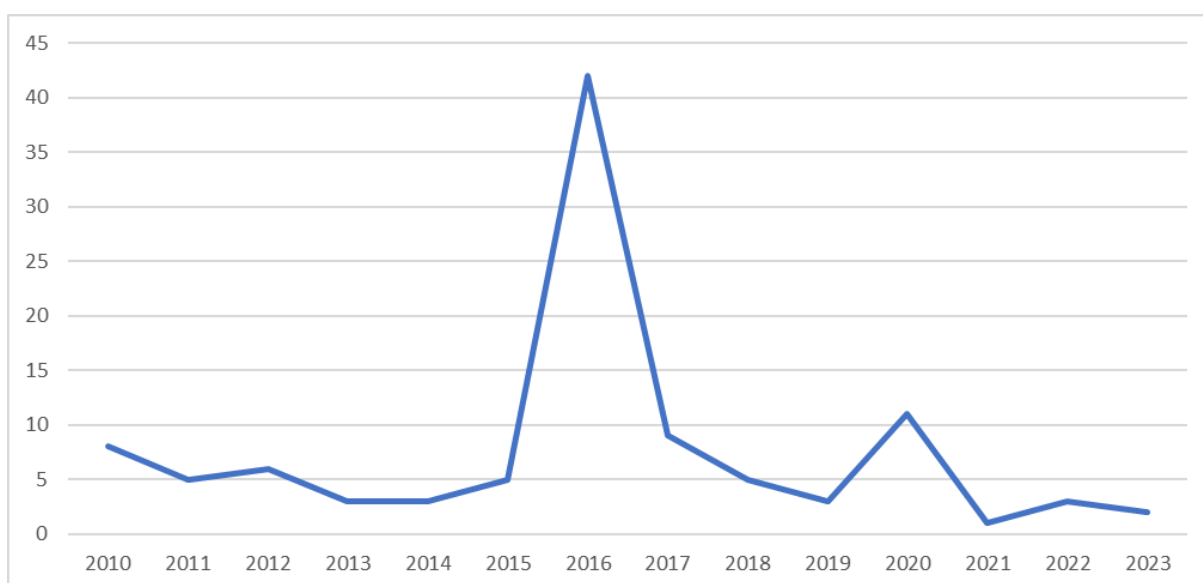


Fig 10. Annual rough sleeping snapshot, 2010-2023, King’s Lynn and West Norfolk. BCKLWN/DLUHC.

Although this graph points towards a dramatic reduction in rough sleeping numbers in the borough since 2015, the snapshot figure is based on the number of people sleeping rough on a single night, which could be affected by weather or other factors. In recent years, the annual count has been carried out during the months of operation of the King’s Lynn Night Shelter.

Therefore, a more accurate picture may be obtained by examining the total number of people found sleeping rough in a month, based on evidence from the Purfleet Trust’s Intensive Support Service, the police, CCTV footage and other sources.

Figure 11 (below) shows that:

- Rough sleeping numbers fluctuate during the year, peaking each winter.
- Rough sleeping numbers have remained relatively stable for the last three winters, based on the trendline.

<sup>28</sup> [Rough sleeping | Crisis UK | Together we will end homelessness](#). The full definition, for the purpose of rough sleeping counts and estimates can be found here: [Homelessness data: notes and definitions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



Fig 11. Monthly no. of people found sleeping rough (total; new; with trendlines) Oct 2020 - Dec 2023. BCKLWN

Although the council does not hold data for the number of people sleeping rough per month *prior* to October 2020, the current position demonstrates a significant and sustained reduction in rough sleeping since the development of the last strategy.

Figure 11 also shows the proportion people found sleeping rough for the first time that month. Since November 2020, 81% of those found rough sleeping were new to the streets that month (and therefore did not sleep rough the previous month). This means that services are working effectively to identify and accommodate people sleeping rough quickly, but that further work is required to prevent people sleeping rough in the borough for the first time.

Compared with other local authorities in the region, King’s Lynn and West Norfolk has a low proportion of people sleeping rough, as per figure 12 below:

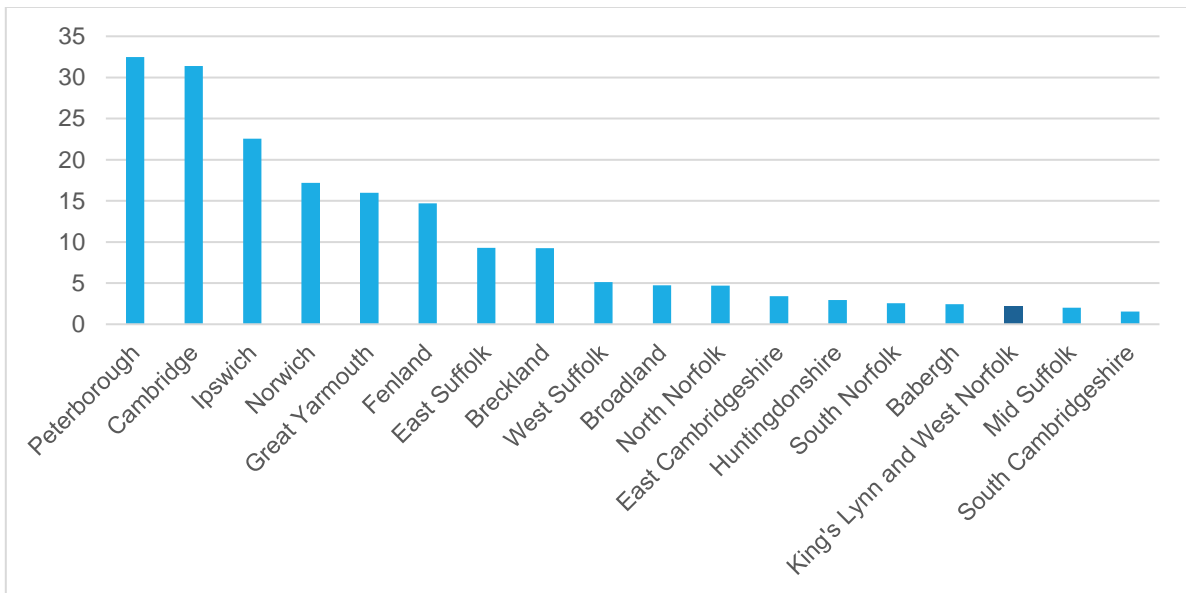


Fig 12. Average monthly total rough sleepers per 100,000 population, Oct 2022-Sep 2023. [ONS](#), [DLUHC](#)

This reflects the good work of the partnership towards ending rough sleeping (see [section 4](#)) at a time when levels of rough sleeping appear to be rising nationally. However, the council is not yet satisfied that rough sleeping has been ended in the borough.

Since last year, the council has worked with DLUHC and the Centre for Homelessness Impact to measure its progress towards ending rough sleeping – that is, “if it is prevented or is otherwise rare, brief and non-recurring”<sup>30</sup>. Council data points towards a level of rough sleeping that is relatively rare and relatively brief. Nevertheless, council staff and partner agencies describe a core of people with increasingly complex support needs, whose homelessness appears to be recurring and who are at the greatest risk of sleeping rough again.

### 3.6 What the agencies say

Through the questionnaire, group sessions and individual interviews, partner agencies provided further insight into current levels of homelessness. Partners identified the following key themes:

- **An increase in demand**

Several agencies identified an increase in demand for their services. The council’s Customer Information Centre (CIC) identified a year-on-year increase in housing enquiries of 11% at the end of 2023. One partner identified “*a higher volume of referrals due to fewer advice agencies and demand outstripping resources*”.

- **An increase in complexity and vulnerability**

Many agencies reported an increase the number of vulnerable people with multiple support needs approaching their services:

*“Over the last five years we have found the clients we are supporting are presenting with more complex support needs.”*

*“We are seeing more customers being referred in crisis, often presenting with higher complex needs e.g. high levels of mental health and substance misuse.”*

*“We have had a higher proportion of guests since 2020 with higher support needs [...] the Charity makes a conscious effort to prioritise referrals of guests with higher support needs if we can care for them safely.”*

*“[The service has seen a] sharp increase in service users with mental health conditions – [this] started in lockdown and is increasing year on year rather than levelling out or reducing.”*

Council data (Figure 13 below) shows that, whilst the total number of homeless applications has increased, the proportion of applicants with support needs has remained largely stable over the past four years:

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<sup>30</sup> [Defining an end to rough sleeping \(homelessnessimpact.org\)](#)

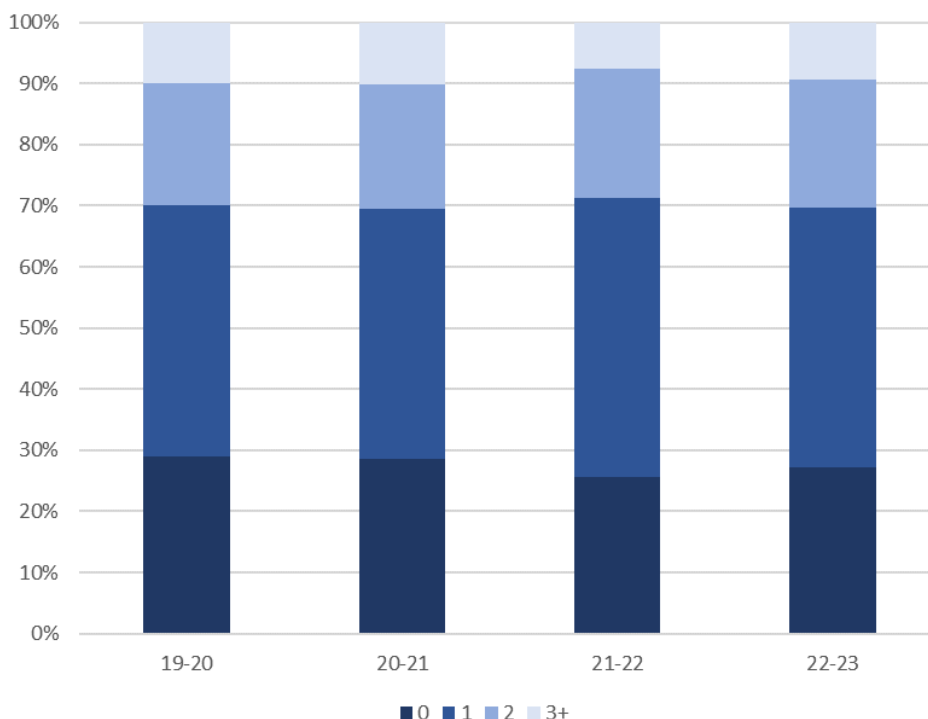


Fig 13. Number of recorded support needs by homelessness application. Apr 2020-Mar 2023 BCKLWN

Although the raw data appears to conflict with the experience of frontline staff and partner services, the following factors should be considered:

- The impact of an overall increase in homeless presentations, resulting in a higher *number* of applicants with multiple support needs.
- The impact of a *reduction* in the face-to-face support provided to some individuals. As one council officer writes, “*clients with mental health issues [were] nearly always accompanied into the office and supported through the process. There doesn’t seem to be any of that [...] and the direction of travel is towards [generalist services].*”
- Possible under-reporting by council staff in terms of the number of support needs per homeless applicant.

### **An increase in homeless families**

Several agencies reported an increase in the number of families seeking help. One agency reports that “*[the number of] households with dependent children seeking our advice is beginning to rise because of the post-pandemic section 21 possession action increases and [the] effects of the cost-of-living crisis*”. Another agency reports that “*in King’s Lynn we are working with more families compared to other district areas.*” The Purfleet Trust opened The Purfleet Pantry in 2023 and has seen “*more families presenting who are at risk of homelessness*”.

This tallies with the council’s own data ([section 3.4](#)).

### **An increase in poverty**

Partners reported the impact of the ‘cost of living crisis’ on their services. The Money Advice Hub reported “*the energy crisis and rise in energy bills is causing poverty for old and new service users*”. They reported an increase in Personal Independence Payment applications, grant and Discretionary

Housing Payment applications, without the resources to cope with the increased demand. Council staff reported increased issues arising from rising interest rates, insufficient Universal Credit rates and frozen Local Housing Allowance rates.

Although the data shows the impact of the partnership's work in preventing and relieving homelessness and rough sleeping, the partnership faces challenges to meet future levels of demand. As one partner put it, *"every customer appears to be vulnerable"*.

The following sections outline the current services available to support households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, as well as attempting to evaluate their effectiveness.

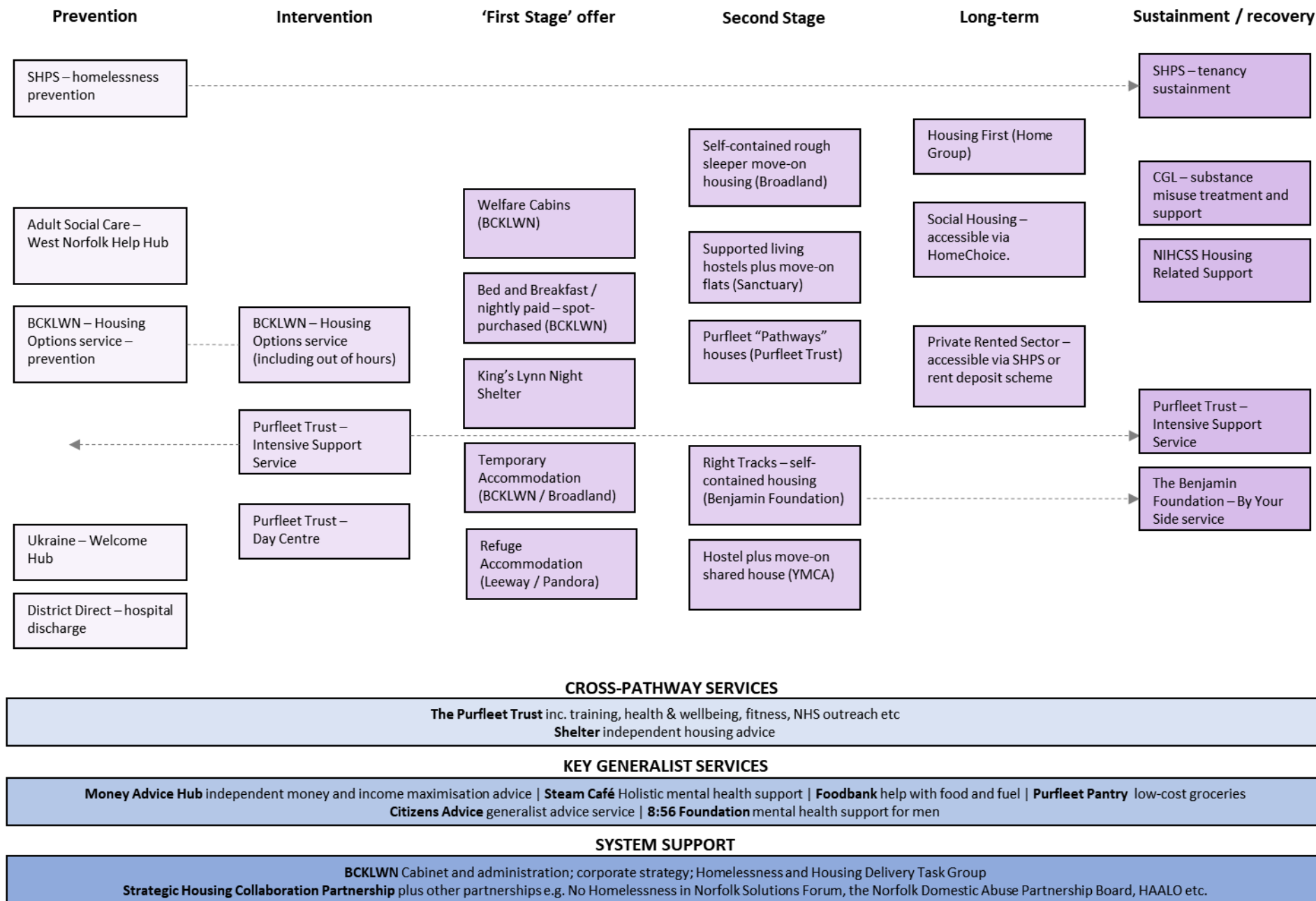


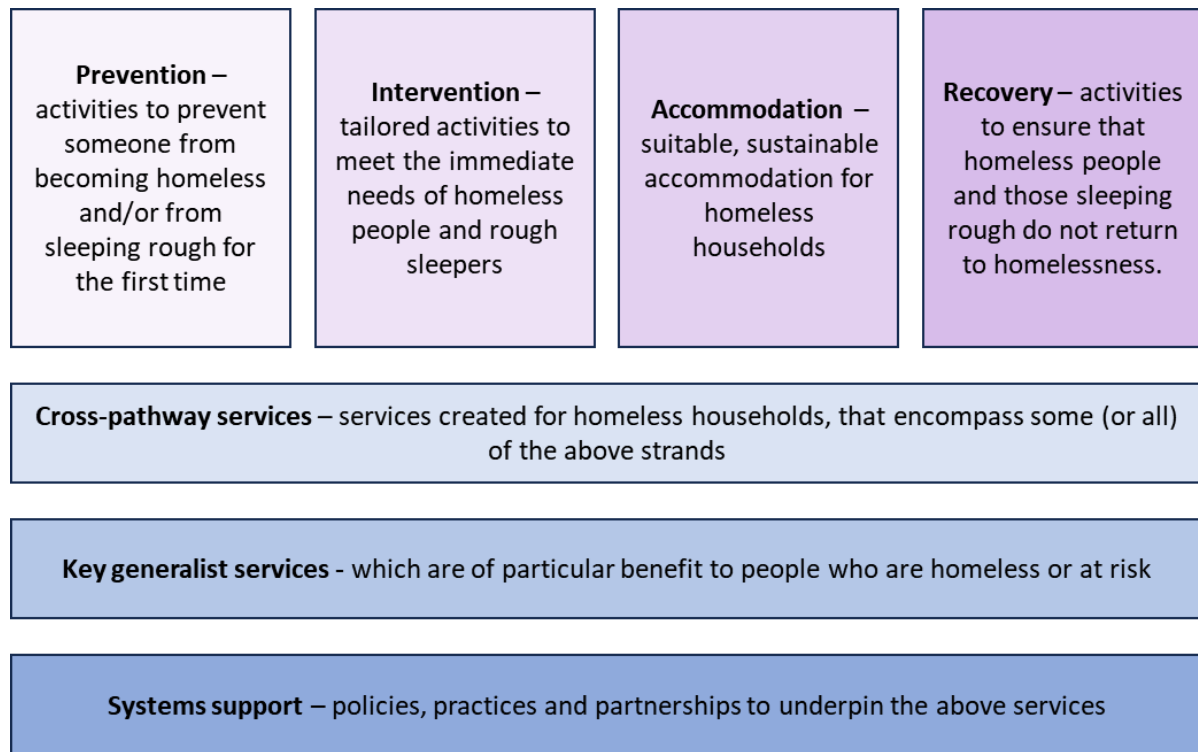
Fig.14 – King's Lynn and West Norfolk – outline of homelessness services pathway



## 4. SERVICES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS

The borough's response to homelessness is delivered by a wide partnership of statutory, commissioned, non-commissioned and voluntary/faith sector services, with the council holding the statutory responsibility. Some services have been created specifically for the benefit of homeless households and/or people sleeping rough; others have a wider remit.

Figure 14 (previous page) loosely groups these services as follows<sup>31</sup>:



Although the pathway has been presented as a straight line, it could better be represented as a circle. Many of the tools required to prevent someone from becoming homeless for the first time are the same as those required to ensure that someone does not return to homelessness or rough sleeping.

Whilst every effort has been made to include the key services within the borough's homelessness partnership, **this section is by no means exhaustive**. Everyone in the borough has a potential part to play in preventing and relieving homelessness, and this report acknowledges the unsung work carried out by individuals, businesses and employers to support people in housing need. To borrow a phrase: it takes a borough<sup>32</sup> to end homelessness.

<sup>31</sup> Groupings based on the prevention/intervention/recovery/systems support strands outlined in the 2022 Rough Sleeping Strategy [Ending Rough Sleeping for Good \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

<sup>32</sup> This is the approach of [It Takes A City, Cambridge](#), which “brings together ‘experts through experience’, managers and frontline workers, members of faith communities, public sector officials, business owners and managers, teachers, students and concerned individuals, working in partnership to end rough sleeping due to homelessness.”

## 4.1 Homelessness Prevention

Homelessness, in all forms, is an unacceptable and traumatic outcome. Key homelessness prevention services in the borough include:

Service	Details
<a href="#">BCKLWN Housing Options Service</a>	The council helps prevent homelessness as part of its statutory housing options service. Applicants are supported to complete a Personal Housing Plan, identifying steps to prevent them from becoming homeless.
<a href="#">SHPS (Sustainable Housing Partnership Service)</a>	SHPS is a homeless prevention service, commissioned “to [...] achieve long-term housing outcomes for those who hadn’t previously been able to receive support, [typically] providing a pathway into the private rented sector.”
<a href="#">West Norfolk Help Hub</a>	The Help Hub is aimed at professionals looking to address their customers’ needs “before their difficulties become unmanageable”. “The Help Hub is for low level emerging needs that can be met through early intervention” such as advice, guidance and practical support.
<a href="#">District Direct</a>	District Direct provides a service to people leaving hospital who are either homeless or who require an adaptation to their properties. The local hospital makes homelessness referrals to the council via the Duty to Refer scheme.
<a href="#">Ukraine – Welcome Hub</a>	The council has provided a homelessness prevention and sustainment service to households fleeing the Ukraine war, matching applicants with host families. Further support is provided through the Hanseatic Union <sup>33</sup> .

## 4.2 Intervention

If an individual or household becomes homeless, there are services available to respond rapidly, including:

Service	Details
<a href="#">BCKLWN Housing Options Service</a>	As well as preventing homelessness, the council supports households who have an immediate housing need, providing emergency accommodation for eligible households and signposting/referring to partners where there is no duty owed.

<sup>33</sup> [Hanseatic Union – King’s Lynn & West Norfolk](#)

<a href="#"><u>Out-of-Hours Service</u></a>	The council commissions an external provider to assess homeless households outside office hours. The provider liaises with a nominated council officer, who decides whether to accommodate the household, in line with legislation.
<a href="#"><u>The Purfleet Trust Intensive Support Service</u></a>	The Purfleet Trust provides an assertive outreach service to verify and support people sleeping rough. The service responds to referrals from Streetlink <sup>34</sup> and partner agencies to ensure that people sleeping rough are supported into accommodation as quickly and safely as possible.

### 4.3 Accommodation

There is a range of mainstream and specialist accommodation suitable for homeless households depending on their household type and support need. This has been broken down into three broad stages – though not every household will access each stage.

- **“First Stage” accommodation** - This comprises accommodation potentially available to households at the point they become homeless:

Service	Details
<b>Temporary accommodation (commissioned by BCKLWN)</b>	The council works with partners to provide temporary accommodation at two key sites. Support is provided by Broadland Housing. The council also works with partners to provide dispersed units of accommodation for families.
<b>Welfare Cabins (commissioned by BCKLWN)</b>	The council provides four welfare cabins for people who would otherwise be homeless or sleeping rough. Residents benefit from ‘in-reach’ support from Purfleet Trust staff, as well as on-site security.
<b>Bed and Breakfast (B&amp;B)/ nightly-paid accommodation</b>	Where there is no other option available and where it is necessary to accommodate a homeless individual / household, the council pays for B&B or other nightly-paid accommodation. Where possible (and safe), the council aims to provide accommodation that is local, with self-contained cooking / washing facilities.
<a href="#"><u>King’s Lynn Night Shelter</u></a>	KLNS “is open for nine months of the year offering 24-hour emergency accommodation in single rooms to anyone with nowhere safe to stay” as well as support to help residents access help and find a longer-term home.
<a href="#"><u>Leeway</u></a>	Leeway operates nine safe houses (refuges) across Norfolk for female victim-survivors of domestic abuse, aiming to provide “overnight accommodation the same day.

<sup>34</sup> [StreetLink - Connecting people sleeping rough to local services \(thestreetlink.org.uk\)](http://thestreetlink.org.uk)

### [Pandora Project](#)

Pandora Project provides “support in safe and secure accommodation for people fleeing domestic abuse”. Accommodation is available to all victim-survivors: female and male victims as well as those in the LGBT+ community.

- **“Second Stage” accommodation** – This comprises accommodation available to single homeless people and (in limited instances) couples, typically as move-on from first-stage accommodation. Each service supports residents to seek and sustain longer-term housing, and to address underlying support needs. There are approximately 117 bed spaces, over the following services:

Service	Details
<a href="#">Sanctuary Supported Living</a>	Sanctuary operates three hostels in the borough (plus eight move-on flats), each with a different level of support needs in mind.
<a href="#">Purfleet Pathways Houses</a>	The Purfleet Trust manages a network of shared houses across the borough, aimed at people who can share with others and who “require more intensive tenancy support to maintain stable accommodation.”
<a href="#">Broadland Housing</a>	The council works with Broadland Housing to deliver self-contained housing for people either (a) “ready to move on from hostels but not quite ready for their own tenancy” or (b) people with a history of rough sleeping <sup>35</sup> .
<a href="#">The Benjamin Foundation – Right Tracks</a>	Right Tracks provides self-contained supported accommodation in King’s Lynn to people aged 16-25. “These are designed to give residents more responsibility than a room” so that residents maximise their chances of sustaining permanent accommodation.
<a href="#">YMCA Norfolk</a>	The YMCA provides an “intensive tenancy management support within a variety of mixed housing”. The accommodation comprises a 15-bed hostel and a move-on site within a shared home.

- **Long-term accommodation** – This comprises accommodation with no defined end date, including ‘mainstream’ housing.

Service	Details
<a href="#">Social / Affordable Housing</a>	Homeless applicants (and those in second-stage accommodation) can apply for social and affordable housing through the HomeChoice

<sup>35</sup> Properties can also be used as move-on for hostel residents, if the hostel space will subsequently be used to rehouse someone who is sleeping rough.

	<p>system. Applicants are awarded banding according to their housing need and in line with the council’s allocation policy<sup>36</sup>.</p> <p>Additionally, the West Norfolk Housing Company<sup>37</sup> was established by the council as a registered provider to acquire further affordable housing in the borough. Tenancy management is carried out by a housing association.</p>
<b>Private Rented Sector</b>	<p>Homeless applicants (and those in second-stage accommodation) can receive assistance to access the private rented sector. The council provides loans towards rent deposits; SHPS provides practical help with accessing the PRS.</p> <p>Additionally, the West Norfolk Property Company<sup>38</sup> was established by the council to purchase homes to be rented privately. Tenancy management is carried out by a property management company.</p>
<b>Housing First</b>	<p>The council works with Home Group and several partner housing associations to deliver up to 12 properties under Housing First principles<sup>39</sup>. Housing First provides intensive support to individuals with a history of rough sleeping, who have previously been unsuccessful in sustaining housing through the hostel route.</p> <p>By providing the housing ‘first’ (rather than as a reward for graduating through the hostel system) and providing wrap-around support, the scheme aims to break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping for individuals facing multiple disadvantages.</p>

#### 4.4 Recovery

The partnership includes a range of services designed to support homeless individuals and households sustain their accommodation and address any barriers that may affect their ability to do so:

<b>Service</b>	<b>Details</b>
<a href="#"><u>SHPS - tenancy sustainment</u></a>	As well as preventing homelessness, SHPS provides up to eight months’ support for new tenants to ensure that they thrive in their new homes.
<a href="#"><u>Change, Grow, Live (CGL)</u></a>	CGL provides support to help people with problematic drug or alcohol use “break free from harmful patterns of behaviour and feel healthier

<sup>36</sup> [Social Housing Allocations Policy | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>37</sup> [West Norfolk Housing Company – A registered provider of social housing \(wnhc.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>38</sup> [West Norfolk Property Limited – An independent private rental property company wholly owned by the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(wnpl.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>39</sup> [The Principles of Housing First | Homeless Link](#)

	and happier". Services include medical treatment, 1:1 and group support, as well as harm-reduction services such as needle exchanges and advice.
<a href="#"><u>NIHCSS Housing Related Support</u></a>	The Norfolk Integrated Housing and Community Support Service (NIHCSS) provides tailored tenancy sustainment support to people engaged in structured treatment with CGL.
<a href="#"><u>Purfleet Trust Intensive Support Service</u></a>	Linked to its outreach service, the Purfleet Trust provides intensive support to people who are most at risk of returning to the streets, to ensure that they sustain their tenancies.
<a href="#"><u>Benjamin Foundation – By Your Side</u></a>	Alongside their Right Tracks accommodation, the Benjamin Foundation provides support to young people leaving accommodation to ensure that they maintain their tenancies and live healthy lives.

#### 4.5 Cross-pathway services

The borough benefits from several services that are targeted at people facing (and/or recovering from) homelessness, but which are accessible at various points of the pathway.

(Note that many of the services featured in sections 4.1 to 4.4 are, to an extent, cross-pathway services – SHPS in particular).

Service	Details
<a href="#"><u>The Purfleet Trust</u></a>	The Purfleet Trust provides advice, support and opportunities for meaningful activity. This includes laundry services, counselling, gym equipment and training opportunities. The health and wellbeing centre acts as a hub for people facing (or recovering from) homelessness to provide mutual support.
<a href="#"><u>Shelter Norfolk</u></a>	Shelter provides a local advice and advocacy service to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, as well as providing emergency county court assistance to people facing possession claims. It provides a specific service to ex-offenders to assist them to sustain accommodation.

#### 4.6 Key Generalist Services

There are several services locally that are aimed at the wider population, but which are of particular benefit to homeless (or potentially homeless) households. Some of the key providers include:

Service	Details
<a href="#"><u>Money Advice Hub</u></a>	The Money Advice Hub is a regulated Debt Advice and income maximisation service provider. Staff are approved Debt Relief Order intermediaries and facilitate all formal debt solutions, as well as advising on welfare benefits, housing and digital skills.
<a href="#"><u>Steam House Café</u></a>	STEAM provides “holistic support to adults experiencing mental health crisis” in a “unique and safe café-style space”, supporting primary health services.
<a href="#"><u>Citizens Advice</u></a>	Citizens Advice provides advice, support and guidance on a wide range of topics including employment, housing, welfare benefits and family law.
<a href="#"><u>Purfleet Pantry</u></a>	The Purfleet Pantry is a social supermarket offering “everyday food and essentials at affordable prices”. The Pantry also sells affordable furniture and often has free donated food available.
<a href="#"><u>8:56 Foundation</u></a>	The 8:56 Foundation supports men to develop their mental health and wellbeing through Time to Talk sessions, online support and social activities.
<a href="#"><u>King’s Lynn Foodbank</u></a>	The Foodbank provides emergency food support to households in crisis. On-site support is available from Citizens Advice, and visitors are signposted to other support services

## 4.7 Systems support

The above services are underpinned by coordination to bring services together, ensuring they contribute to the wider social aims of the borough.

Internally, this includes:

- **A new administration** – the new Independent Group leads the council, with support from the Labour Group. The Cabinet Member for People and Communities oversees “all housing related matters including strategy, homelessness and housing standards”<sup>40</sup>
- **A new corporate strategy** – the council’s Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 was published towards the end of last year. The strategy includes a commitment “to support the health and wellbeing of our communities, help prevent homelessness, assist people with access to benefits advice and ensure there is equal access to opportunities.”<sup>41</sup>
- **A relaunched Homelessness and Housing Delivery Task Group** – this cross-party group works with senior council officers, providing oversight and strategic guidance.

<sup>40</sup> [Executive post - Cabinet Member for People and Communities \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Our priorities | Corporate Strategy 2023 - 2027 | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

External systems support includes:

- **Strategic Housing Collaboration Partnership** – a multi-agency group, established during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim of enabling services to respond to homelessness more effectively. Partnership members have assisted with this review.
- **Other partnership groups** – the council contributes to a variety of partnership groups designed to improve services for homeless households. These include (but are not limited to) the No Homelessness in Norfolk Solutions Forum, the Norfolk Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, the Domestic Abuse and Housing regional group, and the Housing Advice and Allocations Lead Officer Group (HAALO).

#### 4.8 What has changed?

As outlined in the introduction, the borough's residents have experienced significant changes since the last strategy was published. Political and economic factors have influenced the partnership's response to a changing social and economic environment. Key changes include:

- **The impact of COVID-19**

COVID-19 acted as a catalyst for change within homelessness services. The lifesaving Everyone In programme injected funding to provide people sleeping rough with a safe space to stay (including those previously ineligible for assistance). Although the council no longer operates a full 'Everyone In' offer, it offers emergency housing on a case-by-case basis to people who are known to be sleeping rough. Additionally, the council retains four of the 14 welfare cabins commissioned in response to COVID-19.

With government funding, the King's Lynn Night Shelter changed its model in autumn 2020, from providing a communal sleeping area to providing eight single rooms for guests, in line with government guidelines<sup>42</sup>.

In the wake of the pandemic, the borough received funding for the Housing First and Housing Led accommodation described in section 4.3.

The above changes contributed towards a reduction in rough sleeping over the period of the last strategy. However, COVID-19 also had a disruptive effect on the work of the partnership. Following the introduction of government restrictions, some formal and informal partnership meetings ceased, and some in-person homelessness activities moved to online/telephone-based services.

Nevertheless, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic could not have been carried out without the hard, joined-up work of partners in the borough.

- **A three-year DLUHC funding settlement**

Following several years of receiving year-on-year RSI and other funding, the borough's DLUHC funding has been underpinned by a three-year settlement. Although this period is due to expire next year, it has provided the partnership with a degree of security (and the ability to plan more strategically) across a range of government-funded interventions.

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<sup>42</sup> [Operating principles for night shelters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/90422/operating-principles-for-night-shelters.pdf)



- **An emphasis on ending rough sleeping, underpinned by a refreshed Strategy**

Rough sleeping has been the subject of considerable national scrutiny and, linked to the above, the government's Rough Sleeper Strategy (and its manifesto commitment) provided a mandate for funding some of the borough's response.

- **The Domestic Abuse Act**

As previously mentioned, the Domestic Abuse Act ensures that households fleeing abuse are treated as being in priority need for housing. Furthermore, the Act places new responsibilities on 'top tier' authorities (locally, Norfolk County Council), resulting in new services being commissioned to support victim-survivors.

- **Market conditions**

Finally, the impact of cost-of-living pressures and rising interest rates has resulted in the partnership having to do things differently. The Purfleet Pantry has been set up partly in response to the need of local households, including families. The King's Lynn Foodbank has begun to issue fuel vouchers, with year-on-year usage rising dramatically. The council holds an internal working group to develop its responses, including Beat Your Bills<sup>43</sup> and Food for Thought<sup>44</sup> events. And the council's own rent deposit service has had to become more generous considering the tightening of the PRS market.

In summary: the partnership consists of a wide range of services designed to prevent people from becoming homeless, resolve people's homelessness quickly, and ensure that they do not become homeless again, underpinned by mutual and external accountability. But despite the sustained efforts and innovations of partners, and improved outcomes for homeless households, the borough has not yet ended homelessness, nor has it ended rough sleeping.

The next section seeks to review what is working well, what is missing from the service, and what could be improved for the benefit of people in housing need.

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<sup>43</sup> [How the council is helping people to beat their bills this winter | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/news/2023/12/14/how-the-council-is-helping-people-to-beat-their-bills-this-winter)

<sup>44</sup> [LILY | Food for Thought \(asklily.org.uk\)](https://www.asklily.org.uk/)

## 5. REVIEW OF CURRENT PROVISION

The previous two sections outline the extent of homelessness in the borough, as well as the extent of the borough’s response to homelessness. This next section, based on feedback from partners and from people with lived experience of homelessness, attempts to evaluate whether the partnership is doing the right things, and whether it is doing things right.

### 5.1 Prevention

PREVENTION - What’s working well?	
<b>Partnership working</b>	<p>Several partners spoke of good relationships between themselves and others towards homelessness prevention. Council officers stated that Duty to Refer<sup>45</sup> forms from partner agencies are generally of a good quality.</p> <p>As one example of positive partnership working, Money Advice Hub described a good relationship between themselves and Shelter, who have households at risk to the Breathing Space<sup>46</sup> scheme.</p>
<b>Diversionsary services</b>	<p>Council officers spoke highly of the work carried out through the Lily team and the Hanseatic League to support Ukrainian refugees as part of the Ukraine Families Scheme and Homes for Ukraine, resulting in low levels of homeless approaches from Ukrainian nationals.</p>
<b>Underlying prevention commitments</b>	<p>Many local accommodation providers are subscribed to the Homes for Cathy Commitments<sup>47</sup>, “<i>seeing eviction as a last resort</i>”. Recently, supported accommodation providers have agreed a protocol to minimise evictions. Data shows that evictions from supported accommodation providers have reduced over the term of the last strategy.</p>
<b>Customer empowerment</b>	<p>Both Shelter and SHPS reported success with helping homeless households understand their rights and navigate the “system”, such as progressing a homeless application or selling themselves to a prospective landlord. Both agencies describe a balance between empowerment, support and advocacy.</p>

PREVENTION - What are the challenges?	
<b>Early intervention</b>	<p>Agencies report a lack of time to enable homelessness to be prevented – either because customers do not approach early enough, or because referrals to services are not made early enough. One partner stated, “56</p>

<sup>45</sup> [Duty to refer | Duty to refer | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk \(west-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>46</sup> [Debt Respite Scheme \(Breathing Space\) guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>47</sup> [Our Commitments | Homes for Cathy](#)

	<i>days<sup>48</sup> is often still too late for prevention. Identifying and reaching people before this time would be beneficial to reduce escalation.”</i>
<b>Achieving a prevention</b>	Council officers reported difficulties <i>“managing the expectations of customers and other departments”</i> . Whilst the council holds the statutory duty to prevent homelessness, and the partnership takes steps to achieve this, prevention is not always possible. This causes frustration to both applicants and staff.

### PREVENTION - What are the gaps?

<b>Tools and resources</b>	<p>Council officers reported difficulties preventing homelessness, due to increasing caseloads and limited resources. Although the council has worked to increase staffing capacity and improve retention, new staff are not yet embedded. The recent Corporate Peer Challenge report identified recruitment as a particular challenge. Council officers also reported a <i>“lack of prevention tools”</i> other than those previously identified.</p> <p>One agency identified a need for <i>“improved and integrated technology in terms of managing volume and sharing information”</i> in the face of increasing levels of need.</p>
<b>Access to financial assistance</b>	At present, the offer to households facing eviction is limited. Rent deposit (and other) payments are made as loans, which some recipients struggle to repay. Partners expressed a desire to review the use of Discretionary Housing Payments in relation to homelessness prevention, to maximise their effectiveness.
<b>A new generation</b>	One partner described <i>“a whole group of people who are new to poverty [...] and ill-equipped to respond to the challenges they are facing”</i> . If true, this suggests that some households lack the knowledge and confidence to seek early, appropriate help to prevent their homelessness.

## 5.2 Intervention (including emergency / off-the-street accommodation)

### INTERVENTION - What’s working well?

<b>Improved off-the-street offer</b>	Council officers report that the welfare cabins have improved the local offer for people sleeping rough with complex needs. Officers report that the cabins have saved lives for people who have previously refused other offers of accommodation.
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<sup>48</sup> 56 days relates to the typical length of a [homelessness prevention duty](#) – though this can be cut short or extended, depending on circumstances

	Additionally, KLNS is pleased to provide “24-hour accommodation with single rooms – [we are] glad that the emphasis has changed nationally” from the previous communal model.
<b>Outreach</b>	Partners viewed the work of the Purfleet outreach service positively, which (based on rough sleeping data) is working well to quickly identify and accommodate people found sleeping rough.
<b>Processes</b>	The council has recently amended its process and supplier for out-of-hours homelessness enquiries, strengthening the support available in an emergency. Council officers describe “a strong culture of following legislation and avoiding gatekeeping <sup>49</sup> ”.

## INTERVENTION - What are the challenges?

<b>Cost, and use, of bed and breakfast accommodation</b>	<p>The council spent over £280,000 on bed and breakfast accommodation in 2022/23 and is likely to exceed this figure in 2023/24. Clearly, this is an unsustainable position for the council. The sharp increase in expenditure could be attributed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>An increasing level of households requiring temporary accommodation</b> – this has been driven in part by the overall increase in homelessness presentations, the lack of tools and resources to prevent homelessness, and caselaw<sup>50</sup> which ‘lowers the bar’ to temporary housing for single homeless people and couples.</li> <li>○ <b>A lack of resources</b> to work proactively with households in temporary accommodation towards a swifter resolution to their homelessness.</li> <li>○ <b>A lack of suitable permanent accommodation</b> for those moving out of temporary accommodation (see below for further analysis).</li> </ul> <p>As previously stated, B&amp;B and nightly-paid accommodation has a negative impact on the wellbeing of households, regardless of the cost. Whilst the council is by no means alone in their position, reduction in B&amp;B use will need to form part of the forthcoming strategy.</p>
<b>Communication</b>	One partner reported a degree of confusion regarding the offer for people sleeping rough. Whilst the council endeavours to provide safe accommodation (where possible) to people sleeping rough, there is currently no written external guidance on the matter.

<sup>49</sup> [Gatekeeping \(UK housing term\) - Wikipedia](#)

<sup>50</sup> Following [Hotak v Southwark \(2015\)](#), local authorities should consider whether a homeless applicant is “more vulnerable than the average person” rather than “more vulnerable than the average *homeless* person”. Furthermore, para 15.5 of the [Homelessness Code of Guidance](#) states “the threshold for triggering the section 188(1) duty is low as the housing authority only has to have a reason to believe (rather than being satisfied) that the applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and have a priority need.” Whilst the council aims to be diligent in ensuring that it follows case law and guidance, avoiding gatekeeping, this is at significant cost to the local authority.

<b>Co-production</b>	Whilst the council develops and issues Personal Housing Plans for homeless applicants, partners felt that these needed to be utilised more effectively, so that they are a <i>“two-way street between applicant and council”</i> . Council officers felt there was a lack of clear policies to support the progression of a personal housing plan.
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**INTERVENTION - What are the gaps?**

<b>Health and substance misuse outreach</b>	Research <sup>51</sup> shows that assertive outreach is an effective method of support for dependent drinkers, as well as others with enduring support needs. Partners report a lack of funding and staffing to carry out regular assertive outreach sessions.
<b>Teams around the person</b>	Whilst the Early Help Hub is effective for individuals with lower support needs, and whilst some multi-agency meetings are carried out for vulnerable individuals, the partnership would benefit from a more structured approach to supporting people who are at the greatest risk of a return to homelessness or rough sleeping.
<b>Response to increasing complexity</b>	One partner reports an increase in the level of complexity, aggression and violence amongst its service users. Further work is required to meet the immediate needs of people who may be challenging to support.

**5.3 Accommodation**

**ACCOMMODATION - What’s working well?**

<b>Partnerships</b>	SHPS has developed and maintained good relationships with landlords in the private rented sector to secure and sustain accommodation for homeless households. They have <i>“worked hard on developing an ‘estate agent’ skillset – selling the person.”</i>
<b>Housing First</b>	The initiative has been welcomed by partners, <i>enabling “chaotic and vulnerable people to keep their housing”</i> . The service reports that 83% of tenants have sustained their accommodation after two years. This is an impressive result, given the challenges its tenants have previously faced finding and sustaining accommodation. KLNS commented, <i>“I wish everybody who came to the night shelter had a housing first solution.”</i>

<sup>51</sup> [The Blue Light approach | Alcohol Change UK](#)

## ACCOMMODATION - What are the challenges?

<b>Void properties</b>	Freebridge Community Housing, the largest landlord in the borough, have a significant backlog of approximately 170 void properties on general lettable stock, as well as many tenanted properties that need to be brought up to standard. Freebridge staff described it as <i>“a tightrope in terms of dual priorities.”</i> The lack of available social and affordable housing is one of the key reasons for the level of households in temporary accommodation in the district.
<b>Service charges</b>	Partners reported high levels of service charges in some sheltered housing – over £80 per week for heating alone, in one case. As a is prohibitive and renders such housing unaffordable.
<b>Move-on</b>	Many partners expressed difficulties finding affordable accommodation especially for those claiming benefits. Partners have struggled finding landlords who will take homeless households without a guarantor. This has resulted in long waits on the housing register and in temporary accommodation, and slow move on from the hostel system. As one partner said, <i>“people are ready to move on, but they can’t.”</i>
<b>Funding</b>	While Housing First has been effective in reducing cyclical homelessness, the revenue funding underpinning the service is only guaranteed to March 2025, along with much of the homelessness funding that the borough receives.

## ACCOMMODATION - What are the gaps?

<b>Accessible and specialist accommodation</b>	Partners and council colleagues commented on the lack of accommodation for single people with higher levels of support needs. Some suggested that the district needs a high needs hostel, with others suggesting that it needs more Housing First accommodation. Some partners also reported a lack of accessible accommodation on the housing register.
<b>Accommodation with time limits</b>	<p>One domestic abuse provider reported a reduction in the length of time residents were expected to stay in the property from 2 years to one year.</p> <p>Broadland explained that much of their housing-led accommodation was let to people on a two-year basis, with the expectation that they will move on to permanent accommodation after this point. They explained that this is contrary to Housing First principles, which recommend open-ended housing and support.</p>

<b>Private rented accommodation</b>	Partners commented on the lack of available private rented accommodation for people moving on from hostels and temporary accommodation. There is a particular lack of HMO accommodation for younger people, according to SHPS. As a result, a higher than desired number of outcomes from SHPS referrals are into the social housing sector.
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## 5.4 Recovery

### RECOVERY - What's working well?

<b>A focus on wellbeing</b>	<p>Many partners described the efforts made towards improving the wellbeing of their residents and service users. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Empowerment groups, arts and craft therapy” (Leeway)</li> <li>• “A wellbeing toolkit” (Money Advice Hub)</li> <li>• A new outdoor gym and emphasis on “health, fitness and wellbeing” (YMCA)</li> </ul> <p>Other respondents (such as Broadland and Purfleet) described the practical support available to help people move into their houses.</p>
<b>Links with other services</b>	<p>Many respondents reported use of other partnership services such as the Steam Café, as well as applying for grant funding and longer-term assistance elsewhere such as the disabled facilities grant. SHPS spoke of <i>“[good] working relationships with DWP and Seetec to increase clients’ [ability to gain] employment – often increasing their income is the only option for people to find affordable accommodation.”</i></p>
<b>Emphasis on developing independence</b>	<p>Respondents emphasised the importance of developing the resilience and independence of their residents and service users. YMCA reported, <i>“In January we [launched] our Life Ready programme in Kings Lynn which will deliver qualifications, independent living skills and positive activities”</i>. SHPS spoke of adopting an <i>“asset-based approach”</i>, which has enabled 84% of people to sustain their tenancy at the end of eight months. Shelter aims to help people <i>“gain confidence to act alone [...] by helping people to help themselves, meaning that change is sustainable”</i>.</p>

### RECOVERY - What are the challenges?

<b>Engagement</b>	<p>Agencies spoke of the difficulties assisting some tenants and service users, particularly when guests are in <i>“difficult/abusive relationships”</i> or where support needs are combined with drug or alcohol issues.</p>
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<b>Complexity</b>	As mentioned previously, some agencies expressed concern with the prevalence of people with multiple support needs (other than housing). One partner said, <i>“we are so busy with acute cases that we don’t get to people who are upstream”</i> .
<b>Strategic planning</b>	One agency spoke of the need to be <i>“cleverer and more strategic”</i> when supporting residents. They gave the example of how a referral for financial assistance can only be made via an appointment for money advice, creating a bottleneck.

## RECOVERY - What are the gaps?

<b>Outreach</b>	<p>One agency identified a <i>“lack of services offering outreach support for those struggling in their accommodation”</i>. As mentioned previously, there has been a sense from partners that many face-to-face services withdrew in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and have not been restored since.</p> <p>Another provider stated that <i>“the reduction in our in-house Tenancy Support Team means we are not able to provide the low-level support to as many people as we used to.”</i></p>
<b>Medical expertise</b>	The partnership described gaps in mental health treatment services, as well as <i>“difficulty accessing drug and alcohol support”</i> . Partners identified a lack of a Dual Diagnosis specialism within the borough, and a disparity across Norfolk in terms of the breadth and depth of treatment services.
<b>Recovery and Accommodation</b>	One agency spoke of difficulties accessing in-patient alcohol detox and rehabilitation. Treatment is only available to people who have stable accommodation upon release, but many people requiring treatment live in an environment with many other drinkers or have no accommodation at all.

## 5.5 Systems Support and service culture

### SYSTEMS SUPPORT AND SERVICE CULTURE - What’s working well?

<b>Collaboration and information sharing</b>	Many partners spoke of a <i>“good culture of information sharing”</i> , taking a <i>“multi-agency approach to complex problems”</i> . One agency stated, <i>“West Norfolk is one of the best places I’ve worked for in [terms of] collaboration and partnership working”</i> , whilst acknowledging that there is still room for improvement.
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	As a general impression, all partners could identify other agencies they worked well with.
<b>Flexibility</b>	Partners spoke of <i>“a dedicated team with good teamwork and support”</i> where <i>“people aren’t territorial about their work – doing the bit that we can do well, and passing on the bit that others can do better”</i> .
<b>Technological and data management changes</b>	<p>The council’s case management system has been transformed since the publication of the last policy – and as a result, the council has been able to produce a strong dataset to support the review (as detail in section 3). The council has recruited to a new Housing Data Analyst post, using BI and other tools to better identify trends and monitor performance.</p> <p>Money Advice Hub has invested in a new case management system with <i>“robotic”</i> processes and integrated WhatsApp functionality, thus enabling the service to increase its capacity.</p>
<b>Some inclusion of lived experience</b>	KLNS’s recruitment <i>“includes staff and volunteers with lived experience”</i> – Purfleet Trust and others employ people with lived experience as staff and volunteers. YMCA state that they are <i>“client led in service delivery”</i> , for example, ensuring residents are on the panel for interviews.

## SYSTEMS SUPPORT AND SERVICE CULTURE - What are the challenges?

<b>Working Groups and partnerships</b>	Partners reported being unclear as to the purposes of the many borough and countywide partnership groups, with one partner asking, <i>“what are they all there for? What is the purpose? Are there too many?”</i> Some partners expressed concern about the level of resource taken up by multi-agency meetings, that <i>“lots of chatting about different cases”</i> is not a constructive use of time. One partner stated, <i>“at the least, we need structured services with a clear mandate so that everyone can see.”</i>
<b>Recruitment</b>	As previously stated, partners (especially council departments) expressed that the ability to recruit and retain staff remains a challenge, particularly in the face of an increased workload.
<b>Decision-making</b>	Agencies reported that some frontline workers face barriers in terms of making decisions (where authorisation is required from senior staff). Agencies suggestion that a more agile culture in services would enable decisions to be made more promptly and effectively.

<b>Trauma-informed practice</b>	Many services reported that they work in a trauma-informed manner to support homeless applicants. However, there is still further work to be done, to ensure that all services work well with individuals who may have experienced trauma (either through homelessness, or as a contributory factor to their homelessness).
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**SYSTEMS SUPPORT AND SERVICE CULTURE - What are the gaps?**

<b>Co-production with service users</b>	Services spoke of the need to work with <i>“those most directly affected, to dismantle barriers and build better systems together”</i> . One agency spoke of the need for <i>“time to develop trusting relationships”</i> between individuals and agencies, especially where there has been a historic lack of trust. Linked to this, partners spoke of a need for improved information sharing <i>“so that people don’t have to tell their story more than once”</i> .
<b>Funding</b>	Many agencies expressed concern about the funding landscape in the borough, with much funding coming to an end in March 2025. One partner spoke of the need to work more effectively as a partnership or cohort to <i>“go after the bigger money”</i> .
<b>A wider partnership</b>	Partners explained of the importance of widening the partnership. Whilst each organisation was able to identify effective partnerships, the network did not encompass the wide range of services who regularly encounter people who are homeless or facing homelessness.

**5.6 What are services like for the people we support?**

The review asked services, as well as individuals with lived experience of homelessness, what services were like for them. This was carried out:

- As part of the questionnaire sent to partner agencies
- Via two sessions for people with lived experience of homelessness.

Partners provided examples of where services had worked well for their customers. Some of the comments received include the following:

*“Thank you very much for being with us at the conclusion of the contract. This made our task very easy and helped us establish communication with the landlord. Thank you for always being ready to answer our questions and help us with current issues and needs. I understand that it’s your job. It’s so nice that you carry it out conscientiously and are even ready to do more.”* (SHPS)

*“Without Housing First, I’d be in jail, in hospital, or dead”* (Home Group)

*“Many clients will tell us that we are their voice and that when we speak on their behalf other professionals listen.”* (Purfleet)

*"We would like to thank Shelter for all their guidance and great support throughout our case-whether via phone or in person. Not sure we'd have got where we are without your input. Special thanks to our caseworker" (Shelter)*

*"The welcome, the support, the helpfulness – it was what I needed" (KLNS)*

*"Thank you for all your help throughout the whole housing journey. I am so happy as I am moving into a new home today." (BCKLWN)*

However, the two in-person sessions identified challenges in terms of people's experiences as homeless applicants, particularly in terms of accessing homelessness advice during a time of high demand and reduced staffing. Some of the key themes identified included:

- **Accessibility** – applicants expressed difficulties contacting the people dealing with their case, with *"nobody checking in"* with them. One applicant said, *"it's not that I've been forgotten – I've not even been remembered"*. Applicants perceived a lack of empathy and transparency from professionals, with one applicant saying, *"There's a real gap in terms of accessibility – basics in terms of information and communication."* Another said *"It's really painful where you've hit a low point [...] if you're treated in a way that makes you feel like you deserve to get evicted. The gap gets bigger, and the fear gets wider."*
- **Evictions** – applicants explained the impact of having to wait to be evicted before receiving temporary accommodation, due to lack of accommodation. One applicant said, *"Do I enjoy Christmas when I'm just waiting for a knock on the door [from a bailiff]?"* Another described their experience when the bailiffs called. *"The landlords just stood there [...] I was made to feel [gestures with finger and thumb] this big."*
- **Emergency accommodation** – whilst the council has made efforts to improve its emergency accommodation offer in recent months, both applicants and support workers have expressed concerns about the use of bed and breakfast and nightly-paid accommodation.

Additionally, session attendees identified difficulties with the wider system:

- **Drug and alcohol treatment** – one attendee explained the difficulties he faced obtaining prompt help from drug and alcohol treatment providers. *"It works well [for me] now but it took six weeks to get help – not good when you are ready for change."*
- **Economic and transport issues** – attendees expressed concern about transport links to and from accommodation they were offered, especially in terms of attending work. Attendees also expressed difficulties budgeting and managing money when Universal Credit and other benefits are paid monthly in arrears.
- **The system itself** – attendees said *"I'm just a number like everybody else"... "The housing system has been non-existent for 35 years. It's got worse, not better"... "I don't trust the system, social workers, authority, anyone"*

Attendees were keen to be involved in the development of the forthcoming strategy. The council has committed to including the voices and ideas of people with lived experience in its development.

## 5.7 Summary

The above evaluation shows that, through diligence, intelligence and determination, the partnership has made a sustained impact on the lives of homeless households in the borough. However, its job is not done yet. In summary:

- There is a clear focus on prevention within the partnership, with some strong results, but the effectiveness of the partnership towards homelessness prevention appears to be ebbing away due to significant external influences.
- There is a strong and varied “off-the-street” offer to people sleeping rough or at risk, but the cost of accommodating homeless households is unsustainably expensive.
- The partnership has benefitted from the impact of new services across the pathway, but many of these services are vulnerable to future reductions in central government funding.
- There are strong informal partnerships between services, but the partnership would benefit from a stronger “whole system” vision, bringing in a wider net of service.
- Services were able to identify some strong individual outcomes, and some good work towards building services around service users, but there is still a clear gap between some key services and the people that they serve.

Once again, the council would like to thank its partners, as well as local people with lived experience of homelessness, for helping to evaluate local homeless services. This evaluation summarises the progress made by the partnership and provides a foundation for building the 2024-2029 strategy.

## 6. FUTURE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

BCKLWN is one of many councils whose previous homelessness and rough sleeping strategy was devised prior to COVID-19. It is unlikely that anyone preparing a strategy in 2019 would have predicted a global pandemic and developed their strategy in response<sup>52</sup>. The 2024-29 strategy must be sufficiently agile to respond to unanticipated challenges. Nevertheless, there are future threats and opportunities<sup>53</sup> we can predict, as identified by the council and its partners.

	Threats	Opportunities
Political	<p><b>A potential change in government</b> – which could affect (a) the length of funding settlements post-2025 and (b) the national response to rough sleeping and homelessness.</p> <p><b>Policy decisions</b> around the Homes for Ukraine programme, which may affect funding.</p>	<p><b>New local administration</b> – an opportunity to develop the relevant strands of the Corporate Strategy for the benefit of homelessness households.</p> <p><b>Political sensitivity of homelessness</b> – an opportunity to highlight the difficulties faced by households facing homelessness and advocate for change.</p> <p><b>Lived experience</b> – through co-production, an opportunity to educate and empower customers to challenge policy decisions.</p>
Economic	<p><b>State Funding</b> - many externally funded programmes are due to end in March 2025, leaving a potential cliff-edge. This affects wider services (e.g. social services) and is a key recurring theme.</p> <p><b>Cost of living</b> – the current economic crisis is a considerable threat to the viability of local services, in terms of higher costs, lower income and increased demand<sup>54</sup>.</p> <p><b>Fuel Poverty</b> – according to partners: <i>“every other client is an energy problem.</i></p>	<p><b>Local Housing Allowance</b> – LHA rates are to be raised to the 30<sup>th</sup> centile of local market rates in April 2024<sup>55</sup>. This presents a temporary opportunity for homelessness households to access previously unaffordable accommodation. (NB: LHA is not due to be increased again in April 2025, so any positive impact will erode gradually)</p> <p><b>Cooling of PRS market</b> – Zoopla<sup>56</sup> reports that “there are signs that the UK rental market will turn in 2024” with demand beginning to slow.</p> <p><b>Cross-departmental funding</b> – under a new government, there may be opportunity to</p>

<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, initiatives such as Housing First formed part of the council’s 2019-2024 strategy and

<sup>53</sup> Of course, few factors are as polarised as being a clear threat or clear opportunity. For example, there will be elements of both threat and opportunity to a new national government, should this occur in 2024.

<sup>54</sup> [The Road Ahead 2023: The ongoing impact of cost of living | NCVO](#)

<sup>55</sup> [Indicative Local Housing Allowance rates for 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\).](#)

<sup>56</sup> [Rental Market Report: December 2023 - Zoopla](#)

## Economic

*People are hanging on a string. 2024 is going to be a nightmare year”.*

**Unintended consequences of rise in minimum wage** – partners expressed concern about the impact of the rise in minimum wage on (a) employers’ ability to recruit part-time workers and (b) individuals’ entitlement to Universal Credit.

lobby for joined-up funding (across health, justice, communities and so on) that may better suit the needs of vulnerable households.

**Use current pressures as a catalyst for change** – such as the clearly unacceptable level of B&B use nationally and locally.

## Social

**Challenges of staff recruitment and retention** – with a potential impact on quality of customer service.

**Increasing proportions of adults with mental health needs** – increasing demand on services.

**National trend of rough sleeping** – DLUHC data<sup>57</sup> showed an increase of between 18% and 27% between Sept 2022 and Sept 2023. Whilst numbers remain steady in the borough, there is a risk of inward migration<sup>58</sup>.

**Hunger** – the King’s Lynn Foodbank reported a 46% increase in usage in 22/23<sup>59</sup>. As one partner said, *“we have a problem with hungry people”*.

**Service design and expectation** – the partnership has an opportunity, as part of the development of the strategy, to co-produce with people with lived experience, drawing on good practice elsewhere<sup>60</sup>.

**Norfolk Anti-Poverty Partnership** – the council is working with partners towards a countywide anti-poverty partnership, which could improve opportunities for homeless households.

## Technological

**Word-of-mouth** – there is a risk that individuals and services may continue to spread information by word-of-mouth alone, rather than technology to inform residents.

**Data collection and sharing** – there is an opportunity to improve data sharing using SharePoint and other cloud-based tools (subject to appropriate information governance policies).

<sup>57</sup> DLUHC, Ending Rough Sleeping Data Led Framework, September 2023. Snapshot figure 3,418 across England compared with 2,898 Sept 2022; monthly figure 8,442 compared with 6,627 Sept 2022.

<sup>58</sup> In fact, both individuals found rough sleeping on the night of the 2023 snapshot had recently migrated to the area from other districts.

<sup>59</sup> [King’s Lynn Food Bank reveals almost 50% rise in emergency food parcels compared to previous year \(lynnnews.co.uk\)](https://www.lynnnews.co.uk)

<sup>60</sup> Changing Futures Sheffield is a good example of co-production – “when individuals with lived experience are involved in the design, delivery, and evaluation of services.” [Changing Futures Sheffield - Changing Futures - Sheffield, England](#)

Tech...

Partners reported a need for “system improvement, working collaboratively” to ensure services reach those who need them the most.

**Use of BI** – the council could use new BI tools (as well as existing data collection methods) to improve analysis, forecasting and performance monitoring.

Legal

**Renters Reform Bill** – whilst the Bill aims to “bring in a better deal for renters<sup>61</sup>”, it may contribute towards PRS landlords exiting the market (for reasons previously set out in [section 3.2](#)).

**Continued impact of policies such as Right to Buy** – partners expressed a concern of the impact of Right to Buy on affordable housing stock.

**Impact of Universal Credit migration<sup>62</sup>** – which is due to affect borough residents in 2024.

**Impact of Home Office policies** – at the time of writing, the impact of the closure of hotels for asylum seekers has yet to be seen in the borough.

**Homelessness Legislation** – the Welsh government recently published a White Paper<sup>63</sup> proposing a transformation to the homelessness and housing system. Given that the Homelessness Reduction Act was first introduced in Wales, English authorities will observe developments with interest.

**Renters Reform Bill** – the bill offers an opportunity to work collaboratively and proactively with PRS landlords for the mutual benefit of landlords and tenants.

**The Supported Housing Act<sup>64</sup>** – the Act aims to improve the sector and tackle “rogue operators and bad faith providers”. While the council retains positive relationships with all supported housing providers, the Act provides an opportunity to improve standards for homeless individuals.

Environmental

**Climate Change** – the local risk of flooding and other extreme weather events continues to act as a ‘push’ factor away from local developments.

**Planning restrictions** – partners identified the risk of the impact of local planning restrictions on the sector’s ability to build affordable housing.

**Nutrient Neutrality<sup>65</sup>** – whilst West Norfolk is not directly affected,, an extension would create difficulties.

**Changes to the Town Centre** – the changing shape of the town centre in King’s Lynn (as well as Downham Market and Hunstanton) may present opportunities to develop accommodation for homeless households.

The council could use the West Norfolk Housing Company (here and elsewhere) to maximise any s.106 opportunities arising.

Likewise, a reduction in car (and car park) use could release land suitable for affordable and/or specialist housing.

<sup>61</sup> [Guide to the Renters \(Reform\) Bill - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>62</sup> [Moving to Universal Credit from other benefits - Citizens Advice](#)

<sup>63</sup> [Annex B: A white paper on ending homelessness – summary \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>64</sup> [The Supported Housing \(Regulatory Oversight\) Act 2023: debate in parliament - House of Commons Library](#)

<sup>65</sup> [Nutrient Neutrality and the planning system | Local Government Association](#)

## 7. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

This review has set out:

- The current and future levels of homelessness in the borough,
- The resources available, as a partnership, to support homelessness applicants of various household types and support needs,
- An evaluation of the partnership’s effectiveness in dealing with demand,
- The likely opportunities and challenges for the partnership.

Led by the council, the partnership will work to develop its strategy over the next six months, with approximate timings as follows:

<b>April to June 2024</b>	<p>Development of strategy with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homelessness partnership</li> <li>• People with lived experience (possibly laying the foundations for a future co-production group)</li> <li>• “Wider net” of employers, businesses, residents, faith and community groups</li> <li>• Council staff; Homeless and Housing Delivery Task Group</li> </ul>
<b>July 2024</b>	<p>Production of key themes, with a series of deliverable goals, strategies and projects linked to each theme.</p> <p>“Check-back” with partners and lived experience contributors. Briefings to councillors and key partners.</p>
<b>September 2024</b>	<p>Formal adoption by council</p>
<b>October 2024</b>	<p>Partnership-wide launch event.</p>

Importantly: this review has highlighted gaps and challenges that the council and partners will begin to address before the strategy is adopted. For example, work to reduce the service’s reliance on B&B and nightly-paid accommodation has already commenced, whilst acknowledging the importance of a long-term strategy to eliminate B&B use.

The purpose of this review has been to set the scene for the development and implementation of the 2024-2029 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This will consider the following<sup>66</sup>:

<sup>66</sup> Adapted from [Strategic Planning - Experience On Demand \(experience-on-demand.com\)](https://www.experience-on-demand.com)





What do we want the borough to look like in 2029, in terms of homelessness and rough sleeping?

Why do we want it to look like this? Why do we exist?

What is our culture? What do we believe about the work we do and the customers we serve?

How are we going to measure success towards achieving our vision?

What are our plans and tactics to achieve our goals?

As stated in the introduction, this review is like the first act of a play, setting the scene, leaving questions unanswered. **Everyone in the borough is invited to contribute towards the next act.**

## APPENDIX ONE – questionnaire to partners, Autumn 2023. Reformatted.

### Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. Homelessness Review 2023

#### BACKGROUND

You are invited to contribute to the council's review of homelessness services in the borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. The review is a chance to take stock of where we are at as a partnership:

- What has changed over the last five years – particularly in terms of the numbers and types of people approaching our services,
- What services have developed,
- What has worked well,
- What challenges have been faced,
- What gaps and opportunities have emerged because of the above.
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**NOTE:** *If your organisation has more than one distinct service, please feel free to complete this form for each service.*

**NOTE:** *Please regard this questionnaire as a guide to help you review your service and the partnership. Please feel free to attach any relevant reports or publications that would help with our review.*

#### ABOUT YOUR SERVICE

- Service name
- When was your service established?
- Please give a brief outline of your service (max 100 words)
- Who funds your service? And until when?

#### WHO DO YOU SUPPORT?

- Tell us more about who you support (max 250 words). This could be in relation to (but is not limited to):  
Age | Gender | Sexuality | Ethnicity | Disabilities | Health Conditions | Support Needs

If you have a recent, relevant report or other published data, please attach this to your response instead.

- Thinking about **the last five years** (or the lifespan of your service if less than five years), what has changed in terms of:
  - the demographic of the people you support,
  - the nature of the service?

And what has driven this? (max 250 words)

#### WHAT WORKS WELL?

Thinking about your service, and the partnership, what works well in the following areas? (max. 100 words per section)

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Your service</b>	<b>The partnership</b>
<b>PREVENTION</b> – activities to stop people becoming homeless and/or sleeping rough for the first time.	<i>e.g. trained mediators to help young people stay in the family somewhere safe</i>	<i>e.g. strong partnership with debt advice charity to assist service users in area Strong partnerships with some partner agencies but some require improvement</i>
<b>INTERVENTION</b> – activities to support people into accommodation, who are homeless and/or sleeping rough.	<i>e.g. trauma-informed outreach service for people sleeping rough</i>	<i>e.g. effective links with housing options service to support people into temporary accommodation</i>
<b>RECOVERY</b> – activities to sustain accommodation and address underlying support needs.	<i>e.g. weekly group therapy sessions at Steam Café for residents</i>	<i>e.g. joint ‘meetings around the person’ for people recently housed</i>
<b>SYSTEM SUPPORT</b> – underlying strategies and practices to ensure the best service for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.	<i>e.g. co-production group set up with service users</i>	<i>e.g. joint strategy developed to rehouse Ukrainian nationals</i>

### WHERE ARE THE GAPS AND CHALLENGES?

Thinking about your service, and the partnership, where are the gaps and challenges in the following areas? (max. 100 words per section)

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Your service</b>	<b>The partnership</b>
<b>PREVENTION</b> – activities to stop people becoming homeless and/or sleeping rough for the first time.		
<b>INTERVENTION</b> – activities to support people into accommodation, who are homeless and/or sleeping rough.		
<b>RECOVERY</b> – activities to sustain accommodation and address underlying support needs.		

<p><b>SYSTEM SUPPORT –</b> underlying strategies and practices to ensure the best service for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.</p>		
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**AND FINALLY...**

- What do your customers/guests/residents/service users say about you?
- Is there any other information that would help us complete a homelessness review for King's Lynn and West Norfolk?