

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016**

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## **Foreword**

On behalf of the Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group (LCHSG), I am proud to present Lincolnshire's third Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016; a strategy that will support homeless households and those at risk of homelessness in Lincolnshire through a changing policy environment, and challenging economic climate.

The LCHSG is a strategic partnership between the seven Lincolnshire local housing authorities, Lincolnshire County Council, and a range of support providers and voluntary agencies.

A considerable amount has been achieved to prevent homelessness throughout the life of the Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2012 and successes can be attributed to a proactive approach to homeless prevention.

The third Homelessness Strategy will continue to build on the successes of the 2008 -12 strategy and develop further initiatives to improve the lives of those at risk of, or affected by homelessness across Lincolnshire.

The strategy action plan also contains additional actions to prevent and tackle non priority homelessness and rough sleeping. This has been made possible through dCLG grant funding for the Sub Region of Lincolnshire and Rutland. Lincolnshire is pleased to welcome Rutland into its partnership to work with us to effectively meet the needs of homeless and vulnerable people.

Signature; Michelle Howard  
Home Choices Team Manager, West Lindsey District Council  
Chair of Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group

## Executive Summary

“Homelessness is not just a problem of scale. It’s also a problem of complexity – no two people lose their home for the same reason. They all have different life stories... For some it’s a dramatic change like losing a job, or leaving the armed service. For others, it is a problem with drugs or alcohol. In some cases, it is family breakdown or mental illness. For many, it’s a combination of all of these”.

### **HM Government: No Second Night Out Nationwide (2011)**

In line with the National picture, homelessness in Lincolnshire is increasing. Increased unemployment and a potential rise in repossessions, combined with higher levels of personal debt will lead to many more people in our area becoming at risk of losing their home. Compounded by welfare reform and policy change, limited supply of social housing and limited development of affordable housing, there has never been more need to work as a partnership in Lincolnshire.

The complexity of homelessness requires innovative partnership working - sharing skills, expertise and supporting one another - to prevent and tackle homelessness for each person in need of our services.

Lincolnshire is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest county in England and the 4<sup>th</sup> most sparsely populated. A county of contrasts with diverse landscapes covering coastal, rural and urban areas, Lincolnshire has concentrations of population around the city of Lincoln and market towns. Rural and coastal areas present particular challenges with the coastal area characterised by high concentrations of deprivation and high levels of low paid seasonal work, while rural areas have low population density areas, poor road networks and transport infrastructure coupled with social isolation. Lincolnshire housing authorities differ in terms of their stock holding positions, diverse range of customer’s needs and homelessness priorities.

Historically, cross authority partnership working across 2 tier authorities has proved difficult to achieve in most areas. However the seven local authorities in Lincolnshire have a strong track record of working collectively, together with other agencies and service users through the well established **Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group (LCHSG)** to tackle and prevent homelessness in a coordinated way, proactively addressing homelessness issues and developing new initiatives. Lincolnshire has developed its Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016, through a strong partnership between all of those agencies.

The strong foundation and innovative partnership in Lincolnshire has also been recognised as an example of best practice and continues to strive for development and improvement.

The Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016 is a framework for all Seven Lincolnshire authorities, to deliver in partnership with our stakeholder's, our priorities to prevent and tackle homelessness during a changing policy environment and challenging economic climate. Aligned with national and regional priorities, this document sets out our key priorities to ensure sufficient access and support to those at risk of homelessness across our county.

The LCHSG strives to develop and maintain the strategic aims developed for Lincolnshire's Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2012; to continue

- To prevent homelessness through early intervention and targeted prevention;
- To increase access to good quality suitable accommodation;
- To offer support where homelessness has already occurred.

However homelessness remains a complex issue; compounded also by a time of austerity and economic challenge.

### **Building on Achievements So Far**

The 2008 – 2012 County Homelessness Strategy Action Plan has been successful in bringing together partner agencies to tackle and prevent homelessness across Lincolnshire. Achievements through the strategy include:

- Actively engaging in partnership working with our providers, at county and district level. District forums are run across the county, and are well attended by partner agencies
- Increased focus on and commitment to homelessness prevention across Lincolnshire
- Actively engaging with Regional Homelessness Issues across the East Midlands has been valuable for awareness of regional context and to share ideas and best practice
- Positive relationships developed with key agencies (including Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), Communities and Local Government (dCLG), Homelessness Link and National Treatment Agency (NTA); supporting and raising the profile of Lincolnshire
- Emergency 'Nightstop' schemes successfully developed in South Holland and East Lindsey
- Better understanding of needs, and of legislative requirements has led to accommodation and support provision for young people becoming a priority for Lincolnshire

- Achievement against Government target to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation has been achieved
- Commitment to tackling empty properties - Funding secured and Empty Property Pilot project launched in NK, COL, & WL
- Continued commitment and investment to supporting a programme of interactive homelessness awareness in secondary schools through the Zest Theatre Tour
- Successful recession awareness campaign carried out and 55 households prevented from becoming homeless through the Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme to date
- Continued investment in practitioners' personal and professional development
- dCLG grant funding of £70,000 CLG grant received to tackle youth homelessness across Lincolnshire. This was used to fund a youth housing coordinator for 12 months. The remainder of the funding contributed to the Zest Theatre Tour for 2011 and 2012.
- dCLG grant funding of £50,000 (across the Lincolnshire – Rutland sub region) received to tackle rough sleeping. The Lincolnshire and Rutland Authorities adopted a single approach, and commissioned a partner agency to tackle rough sleeping across the sub region. This approach has been acknowledged by dCLG and Homeless Link as Best Practice
- dCLG grant funding of £15,000 received specifically to train and develop knowledge of housing and children's services officers on legal responsibilities for supporting and accommodating 16/17 year olds at risk of homelessness. Subsequent good practice and partnerships formed with children's services. Ongoing development has been achieved through the appointment of Lincolnshire's Youth Housing Coordinator in January 2012.
- Ongoing commitment to fund Lincolnshire's Homelessness Strategy Officer. The post is currently funded, through district council contributions, to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. This post brings together in a coordinated way all seven district councils and stakeholders homelessness practices and actions to prevent homelessness and drives forward the actions of this strategy.
- Developed multi agency focus on enabling 'move on' by bringing the move on action plan into the LCHSG

## 1.0 Introduction

The latest National Statutory Homelessness data shows an increase in the number of households being accepted as statutory homelessness. In 2011 48,510 households were accepted as homeless, in England up 14% from 42,390 acceptances in 2010. In the changing policy environment and challenging financial climate Lincolnshire housing authorities and their partner agencies will need to work in partnership to prevent homelessness and ensure that the needs of homeless and vulnerable people are met during a time of likely increase in demand for our homeless services.

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires that all Local Authorities review homelessness in their districts and formulate and publish a strategy based on the findings of a review. A review of homelessness in Lincolnshire was completed in November 2011 and the full review can be accessed at <http://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-strategy/homelessness-strategies?tab=downloads>

This review; along with extensive consultation with partners, stakeholders and customers has led to the development of a robust strategy (2012 – 2016) with partnership at its core to enable an effective approach to preventing and tackling homelessness across Lincolnshire.

The priorities of the current strategy have been developed through extensive analysis of service provision and subsequent gaps, followed by consultation with practitioners, members, service users and private landlords.

### Homelessness Review and Strategy Development

- The review was led by a working group represented by each local authority, bringing together strategic housing and homelessness knowledge and expertise.
- Data from a number of sources has informed the development of the strategy. Further information is available at <http://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-strategy/homelessness-strategies?tab=downloads>
- The review included analysis of the needs of homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, the main issues affecting these people and the resources available to meet the problem. A detailed picture was compiled of past, current and future profile and levels of homelessness across the county.
- Consultation workshops were held throughout October 2011 with Housing Advice Teams, stakeholders and service providers to understand which service user were most in need of homelessness and homelessness prevention services.

- Through the review process, five key themes have emerged. These are discussed in more detail in our priorities section.
  - **Partnership Working**
  - **Prevention**
  - **Young People**
  - **Rough Sleepers**
  - **Welfare Reform**

Particular emphasis is given to those service user groups where analysis and consultation demonstrated that demand exceeded current provision. An additional, overarching theme identified through the review and consultation is that of '**move on**'. Move On objectives are incorporated into the strategy action plan alongside each of the emerging themes.

Through recognising the need to raise awareness of youth homelessness. Young people were asked to put their flair of drawing to the test and capture what homelessness means to them in an original drawing. The winning entry is featured on the front cover and a prize was given to the winning school to script and perform a soap opera drama based around youth homelessness.

- A Homelessness Conference was held in November 2011; attended by almost 100 practitioners from across Lincolnshire; the conference explored emerging themes with the support of specialists in each of the respective fields. Consultation at this point sought support for the themes in preparation for these being taken forward as strategic priorities.
- Lincolnshire's Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016 has been agreed by all 7 local housing authorities and endorsed by members for implementation. The strategy has been developed, and will be managed and delivered in conjunction with our partners.
- Achievements against the strategy action plan will be reviewed and monitored annually or more frequently in light of need or policy change. Progress reports will be shared with LCHSG members, and the Lincolnshire Supported Housing Partnership. Communication with the public and stakeholders will also be a priority.

## **1.1 Countywide Approach – Partnership Working**

Partnership working presents its own challenges when working across 2 tier authorities however the seven Lincolnshire housing authorities have a strong track record of working collectively, together with other agencies and service users through the well established Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group (LCHSG) to tackle and prevent homelessness throughout the County.

Working as a team means that there is a far better chance of achieving successful outcomes; the changing policy environment and challenging economic climate mean that a team approach has never been more important than it is now. As part of the LCHSG, practitioners share a common aim; to develop and deliver services to improve outcomes for vulnerable people across Lincolnshire.

### **The LCHSG and Sub Regional Homelessness Strategy Officer**

The LCHSG meets on a monthly basis, rotating across the County. The group is attended regularly by over 25 practitioners, and is represented by the district Council's, County Council and a range of voluntary and third sector agencies. The group strives to continually develop links, and more recently has been joined by providers of newly commissioned Supporting People services, Health Service, Leaving Care Service, and Local Authorities from across the Lincolnshire border.

The successes of the LCHSG can be attributed in no small part to the work of the Groups Strategy Coordinator. This role is jointly funded by the seven Lincolnshire Housing Authorities and demonstrates their commitment to effective joint working. The group's Coordinator, under the steer and dedication of the group's Chair and with the support of all statutory partners, has driven forward the actions of the strategy and has led the consultation and development of the County's new Homeless Strategy.

### **Sub Regional Grant Funding**

#### Partnership with Rutland County Council

On occasion, Central Government (dCLG) allocates grant funding by 'sub region' to deliver specific priorities. The Lincolnshire sub region for tackling the following priorities includes Rutland County Council.

- Rough sleeping
- Tackling homelessness for non priority households
- Mortgage rescue

#### Joint Commissioning

Joint commissioning is a means of delivering improved outcomes where there are shared aims and objectives between organisations while taking into account value for money.

Lincolnshire has jointly commissioned a Rough Sleeper Project with Rutland and a County Youth Housing Coordinator Post with Children's Services

Lincolnshire will continue to take a strategic approach to future commissioning of services.

Also incorporated into the homelessness strategy action plan are the additional actions made possible through dCLG grant funding to facilitate the prevention of homelessness for non priority households and rough sleepers. These actions are clearly identified in the action plan.

## **Sub Regional Grant Funding to Prevent Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping**

### **Overview**

- £20 million made available to Local Authorities to ensure front line provision to prevent single homelessness and rough sleeping nationally.
- Sub Region of Lincolnshire and Rutland has received an allocation of £259,000
- Boston Borough Council will act as lead authority
- Expectation that the funding will remain as a single approach and not be split between authorities within the sub region
- The Lincolnshire – Rutland sub region partnership has been highlighted as an example of best practice...we are a strong partnership and can make effective use of this funding

### **Objectives**

- To prevent and tackle rough sleeping, single homelessness
- To develop a generic early intervention and prevention service

### **Aims**

- Ensure that all homeless people approaching an authority for assistance get –
  - Tailored Advice and assistance to prevent or resolve homelessness – also set out in writing
  - An offer of suitable accommodation if required (be that access to the PRS, a hostel place or emergency accommodation)
  - Access to / linked into any additional support they may need
- This prevention activity / assistance should be provided irrespective of the route by which the customer came into contact with the authority (eg: through a front line housing options service, homelessness application, presenting as a rough sleeper, or any other route available in the local area)

## 2.0 National Strategic Context

### Summary

There is an unprecedented amount of policy and economic change that will impact on homelessness during the life of this strategy.

### Localism

“The time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today”.  
**Coalition Agreement, May 2010.**

- The Localism Act [2011] sets out the new freedoms and flexibility for local Government, rights and powers to local communities, reform to the planning system and decisions about housing to be made locally.
- The Act 2011 will give local authorities more freedom and flexibility in the allocation of social housing. Local Authorities will be given the opportunity to reorganise how they manage their housing registers, to reflect local need. Local Authorities will be able to utilise the private rented sector to bring the main homelessness duty to an end with an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector. These changes will enable Local Authorities to make flexible decisions on accommodation and whether the need can be met adequately without the offer of social housing, freeing up the national resource of social housing for those with the greatest need.
- The Armed Forces Covenant will bring additional support for current and former Armed Forces Personnel making sure they are not disadvantaged in accessing social housing.
- Local Authorities will be given flexibility to manage their housing registers, allocate social housing, and create a broader range of housing options utilising the private rented sector to meet local housing need. The Localism Act will allow Local Authorities and Registered Providers to create new forms of social tenancies that can be replaced by offering fixed term minimum of two year tenancy up to 5 or 10 years renewable depending on household circumstances.
- Local Authorities will need to develop a Local Tenancy Strategy by January 2013 the objectives will be;
  - A better use of social and affordable housing to more effectively address housing need
  - A better use of social and affordable housing to reduce cost
  - Increased local and customer accountability for the use of social and affordable housing

- A better use of social and affordable housing to contribute to sustainable community outcomes
- An affordable rent model was created based on charging up to 80% of market rents to help develop new affordable housing.

## **National Housing Strategy**

- The Coalition Government has prioritised protection of the most vulnerable, through the National Housing Strategy for England [2011] and has developed measures to tackle the complex underlying causes of homelessness through the Ministerial Working Group.
- The 2010 Spending Review prioritised protection for the vulnerable and the Coalition Government established a multi discipline Ministerial Working Group across 8 departments to tackle the complex underlying causes of homelessness in particular rough sleeping, relationship breakdown, unemployment, offending, bereavement and health problems. The first report published by the group Vision to End Rough Sleeping, “No Second Night Out Nationwide” sets out six commitments to give local authorities the tools to tackle rough sleeping:
  - Helping people off the streets
  - Helping people to access health care
  - Helping people into work
  - Reducing Bureaucratic burdens
  - Increasing local control over investment in services
  - Devolving responsibility for tackling homelessness
- In 2011 the Government responded to a significant increase in statutory homelessness with a number of radical reforms nationally, to its social housing and welfare policy, which resulted in the first national housing strategy.
- Tackling homelessness is a key priority set out in the Government’s Housing Strategy “Laying the Foundations”, A Housing Strategy for England [2011], the Coalition Government is committed to providing appropriate support, protection and opportunities to struggling households and to making the best use of social housing for the most vulnerable and those that need it the most.

## **Homelessness Transition Funding**

- The voluntary sector working with homeless and vulnerable people face a challenging economic climate. The Governments £20 million Homelessness Transition Fund will help deliver the principles and standards of No Second Night Out Nationwide, by supporting critical homelessness services where evidence of rough sleeping is increasing. The fund offers voluntary organisations transitional protection for critical services at a time of increased demand for

homeless services and will allow for alternative funding streams to be sought.

- A £20 million Homelessness Transition Fund was set up to help support the No Second Night Out Vision. Lincolnshire housing Authorities through partnership with Framework Housing Association supported a successful bid to develop a rough sleeper's outreach and reconnection service operating across Lincolnshire to support homeless and vulnerable people off a street based lifestyle.

### **Preventing Homelessness Grant Funding**

- The Coalition Government is supporting investing in homelessness £400m has been invested to prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the next four years. Local Authorities will receive a proportion of this funding through their annual Preventing Homelessness Grant. This grant will be used in a variety of different ways to prevent homelessness. A further £20m has been invested to offer support specifically to single homeless people who are outside Homelessness Legislation and can find themselves with fewer housing options. In February 2012 it was announced that help will also be available for struggling homeowners at risk of repossession through a £19m Preventing Repossession Fund.

### **Welfare Reform Act**

- The Welfare Reform Act [March 2012] will introduce a wide range of initiatives to make tax benefits and tax credit fairer and simpler, with the overarching emphasis of getting people back into work, and making work pay. The relevant changes that are likely to impact on homelessness are;
- Change to Local Housing Allowance, will mean benefit claimants will only be able to afford 1 in 3 properties in the private rented sector
- Capping the Local Housing Allowance
- Change to the Shared Room Rate from April 2012 single people under 35 will only be eligible for housing benefit to rent a room in shared accommodation.
- Universal Credit – will bring households benefit payment into one single payment.
- The benefit cap – a total cap will be brought in on the total amount of benefit that working age people can receive so workless families will not receive more than average working families.

### **3.0 Countywide Strategic Context**

Tackling homelessness is not just about providing housing. The complex and diverse nature of homelessness will require this strategy to link with a broad range of services and plans to focus on and promote healthy and vibrant communities in Lincolnshire.

#### **3.1 Lincolnshire Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009 – 2030**

Partners across Lincolnshire worked together to set out the overall strategic direction and long term single vision for the economic, social and wellbeing of the local area. Homelessness and safe appropriate housing are directly linked to many of the themes within this Strategy.

**3.2 Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Strategy** – a strategy is currently in development and this will provide opportunities for participation of housing and homelessness services in domestic abuse priorities.

**3.3 Lincolnshire Empty Homes Strategy 2010 – 2013** aims to bring empty homes back into use and help increase the supply of affordable homes and reduce homelessness.

**3.4 Lincolnshire Youth Housing Strategy** – The current strategy has expired, however, a new document to guide the youth housing pathway in Lincolnshire is being developed.

**3.5 Safeguarding** – All Local Authorities carry out their work to ensure compliance with Section 11 of the Children Act the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the delivery of all aspects of the homelessness service. A revised countywide strategy to consider adult safeguarding is currently being developed.

**3.6 Housing Related Support Agenda** – offers housing related support for vulnerable people, this responsibility is now managed by local government.

**3.7 Lincolnshire Housing Strategy 2009 – 2014** was developed during changing times for housing and therefore reflects many challenges including a continued high demand for new homes, an emerging emphasis on place shaping and a need to further understand the Lincolnshire housing markets and how to meet housing need.

**3.8 Sub Regional Housing Market Assessments-** Provides information on the level of need and demand for housing within an area and explores the opportunities that exist for meeting that need. It is an important document which contributes to the shaping of local strategic thinking in housing and planning.

#### **3.9 Community Safety**

Link with community safety teams to reduce crime and anti social behaviour

**3.10 Families Working Together** - Provides support to families with multiple problems such as housing and managing debts, unemployment, school attendance and involvement in anti-social behaviour through integrated support from multi agency partners.

#### **4.0 Legal Framework**

The homelessness legislation – that is, Part 7 of *the Housing Act 1996* – provides the statutory under-pinning for action to tackle homelessness. It is a vital safety net for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.

The homelessness legislation places a general duty on housing authorities to ensure that advice and information about homelessness, and preventing homelessness, is available to everyone in their district free of charge. The legislation also requires authorities to assist individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and apply for help.

For more information – useful links

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/152056.pdf>

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/23358/Advice\\_booklet\\_Homeless\\_read\\_this.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/23358/Advice_booklet_Homeless_read_this.pdf)

### **5.0 Homelessness in Lincolnshire**

#### **5.1 Why do we prevent homelessness?**

Preventing homelessness is a national and local priority, “It is vital that we prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable in order to prevent damage to individuals and communities and to avoid higher costs for local services later on”.

#### ***Preventing homelessness and protecting the most vulnerable***

The aim of prevention activity is to intervene to prevent households from becoming homeless and to manage the consequences of households already in a homeless crisis.

Lincolnshire Authorities have prevented over five thousand households from becoming homeless throughout the life of the 2008 – 2012 strategy. Housing Advice Teams use a wide range of varied tools and projects to prevent homelessness.

The table below shows the number of household prevented from becoming homeless broken down by district over the life of the 2008 – 2012 strategy.

Authority	2008/09	2009/2010	2010/11
Boston	58	85	179
East Lindsey	322	412	513
City of Lincoln	79	232	363
North Kesteven	196	309	375
South Holland	336	448	406
South Kesteven	125	376	353
West Lindsey	53	110	175
Lincolnshire	1169	1982	2314

Homeless prevention delivers social and economic benefits to residents of Lincolnshire;

Preventing homelessness provides positive outcomes for homeless households in a cost effective way.

“Demonstrating the cost effectiveness of preventing homelessness, not only will enable households to remain in their existing accommodation by cheaper than securing alternative accommodation, this also brings wider social-economic and health related benefits by avoiding substantial social disruption and “knock on” resettlement costs.”

Demonstrating the cost effectiveness of preventing homelessness dCLG July 2010

Preventing homelessness delivers both social and economic benefits to residents of Lincolnshire and has an impact on wider services such as health, education and employment.

Positive Outcomes for homeless people

- Enabling households to remain in their home contributing to prosperous and sustainable communities
- Preventing homelessness has health benefits contributing to the feeling of wellbeing
- Preventing homelessness leads to greater stability for families, contributing to higher educational attainment
- Preventing homelessness can sustain employment and contribute towards the local economy

Cost Effectiveness

As demonstrated through research by Heriot-Watt University in 2007 preventing homelessness has significant savings compared to the cost of helping someone who is already homeless and provides value for money. Through using this approach Local Authorities can prevent more households from becoming homeless.

## 5.2 Homelessness Acceptances

Across England, Homelessness is increasing. There were 48,510 households accepted as homeless in the calendar year 2011, up 14 percent from 42,390 acceptances in 2010, and this trend looks set to rise further.

Central Government collects Homelessness data known as P1E information from all local authorities on a quarterly basis. P1E data is the main resource nationally for determining levels of homelessness. It refers to the number of households approaching the Local Authority as homeless and the number of households accepted as homeless and owed a full housing duty (statutory homeless).

The number of homeless applications and acceptances in Lincolnshire decreased between 2008/09 to 2010/11 this is attributed to the successful implementation and development of the prevention approach taken by homelessness teams rather than assistance at the point of crisis.

The following table shows the number of homeless applications made in Lincolnshire and broken down into district from April 2008 to March 2011.

Year	Homelessness Applications in Lincolnshire	BBC	EL	L	NK	SH	SK	WL	England
2008/09	814	146	191	163	49	65	132	68	112,900
2009/10	632	93	152	100	31	62	144	50	89,120
2010/11	692	80	153	97	34	60	201	67	102,200

Source P1E Homelessness Returns & dCLG live tables on homelessness

The following table shows the number of those applications which were accepted being owed a full housing duty.

Year	Homelessness Acceptances In Lincolnshire	BBC	EL	L	NK	SH	SK	WL	England
2008/09	425	37	82	122	37	19	87	41	53,430
2009/10	354	15	78	73	23	21	109	35	40,430
2010/11	441	23	73	72	29	29	172	43	44,020

Source P1E Homelessness Returns & dCLG live tables on homelessness

The above tables relate to homelessness applications and acceptances and shows that all districts with the exception of South Kesteven saw a decrease in applications throughout 2008/09 and 2009/10. A decrease in applications and acceptances would have been the expected trend due to the Government's focus on prevention. Low LHA rates and high rental value have limited prevention options and has driven higher rates of homelessness applications in South Kesteven.

All districts saw an increase in acceptances from 09/10 to 10/11, the increase is in line with that of National trends and was to be expected as the impact of the recession took hold. The same applies as above with regard to South Kesteven.

The table below show the number of homelessness acceptances by age by Lincolnshire Authorities during 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Year	Acceptances	Age 16-24	Age 25-44	Age 45-59	Age 60-64	Age 65-74	Age 75 +
2008/09	425	165	197	43	2	16	2
2009/10	354	130	163	43	9	7	2
2010/11	441	165	198	54	5	14	5

As would be expected the widest age group 25 – 44 has the highest number of homeless acceptances. However it is notable that young people aged 16 – 24 account for 38%, 37% and 37% respectively for the years 08/09, 09/10 and 10/11 of all homeless acceptances in Lincolnshire.

### 5.3 Reasons for homelessness

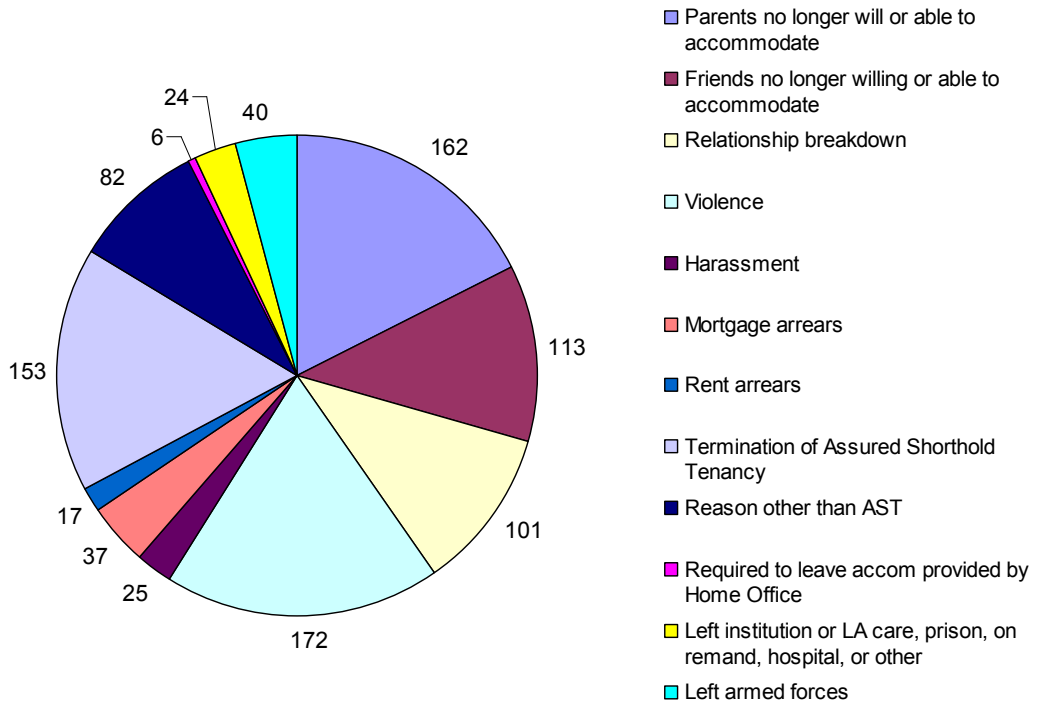
A review of our countywide P1E Homelessness Statutory Returns shows that the most common reasons for homelessness across Lincolnshire in 2010/11 are;

- Violence
- Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate
- Ending of Assured Shorthold Tenancies

These three reasons are consistent with the previous year and are broadly consistent with National trends. The impact of this data evidences the need to forge strong partnerships with private sector landlords, continue work around young people, continue to support victims of violence and most of all continue the excellent prevention work undertaken by all districts.

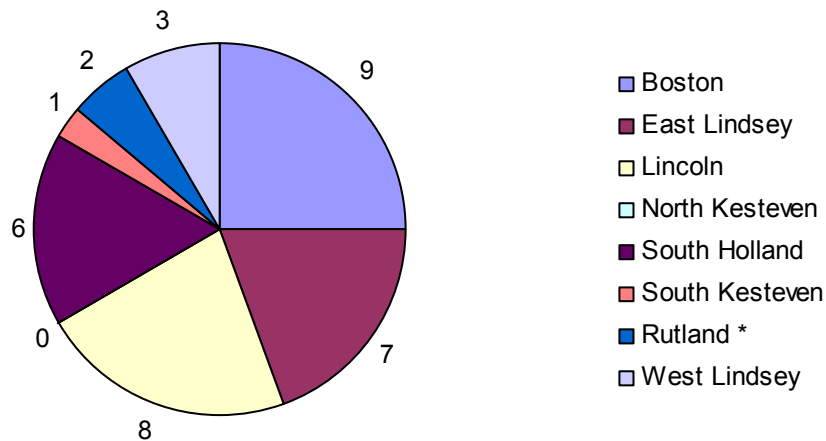
The graph below shows the reasons why households became homeless during 2008/09 – 2010/11.

Reasons Why Households Became Homeless in Lincolnshire During  
2008/09 - 2010/11

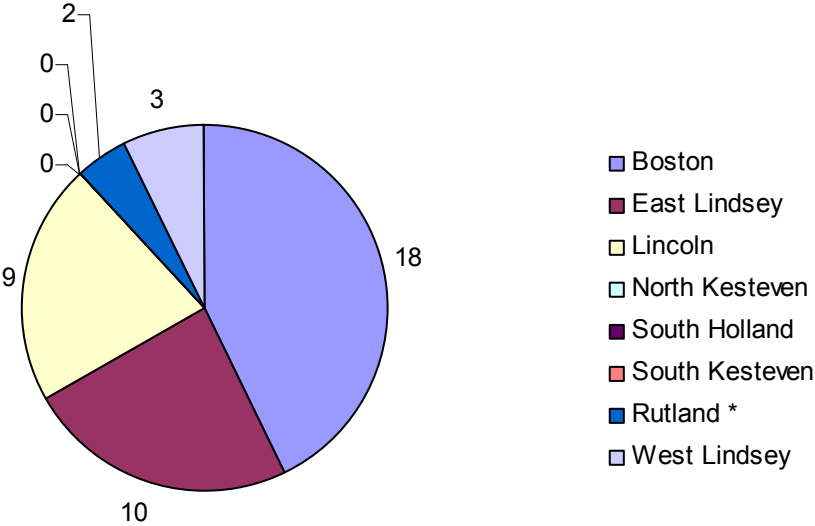


The graphs below show the number of rough sleepers recorded on a single night between 1<sup>st</sup> October – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010 and 2011 in Lincolnshire and Rutland.

Number of Rough Sleepers Recorded on a Single Night  
between 1st October - 30th November 2010 in  
Lincolnshire & Rutland



Number of Rough Sleepers Recorded on a Single Night  
between 1st October - 30th November 2011 in  
Lincolnshire & Rutland



\* Rutland is a partner in tackling rough sleeping and is therefore included in the Lincolnshire grouping.

During 2010 36 people were recorded as sleeping rough across Lincolnshire and Rutland. In the same period in 2011 42 rough sleepers were recorded as sleeping out.

Boston, East Lindsey and Lincoln are hotspots for rough sleeping and future services will be targeted in these areas to reduce rough sleeping. Nationally the biggest increase in rough sleeping is in the East of England and East Midlands.

## 6.0 Our priorities

Our priorities were chosen through consultation workshops, held with Housing Advice Teams, service providers and stakeholders, together with mapping of services, resources and current provision. Attendees at the workshop were asked based on their current experience what were the main issues affecting homelessness services and which service user groups were most in need of homeless prevention services.

In order to deliver homelessness services into the future, prevention, partnership working, welfare and policy reform and move on will be key priorities.

Young people and rough sleepers were service user groups identified as having specific needs and therefore taken forward as strategic priorities. It's expected that these groups will have additional issues compounded by the changes to welfare reform and lack of affordable housing.

**Prevention** – a focus on prevention is a key development in the homelessness field, and one which is incredibly valuable. Prevention is so broad it covers early intervention, education and support for schools, hands on support for individual cases and supporting households to sustain accommodation. It also includes effective preparation for things which may impact on demand for homelessness services.

**Partnership Working** – includes partnerships at a county level, district level and more informally between partner agencies. Partnerships need to be supported and continually developed to be most effective.

**Welfare and Policy Reform** – There is an unprecedented amount of policy and economic change that will impact on homelessness during the life of this strategy. To meet the challenges of economic uncertainty and welfare reform it's essential to predict the impact of the changes to reduce and manage the demand on our homelessness services through developing access routes into the private rented sector and preventing evictions.

**Youth Homelessness** – There is a clear focus on meeting the needs of young people between Housing and Children's Services. The landmark Judgement by the House of Lords in R (G) v LB Southwark 2009 reinforced the need for Children's Services and Housing Authorities to secure or provide accommodation for homeless 16/17 year olds. Children's Services and Housing Authorities are committed to working together to meet the needs of young people across Lincolnshire. Need will be addressed through developing a clear pathway out of homelessness, focusing on early intervention and prevention, prevention at the point of crisis, support and stabilisation and resettlement.

**Rough Sleeping** - the Government drive to end rough sleeping is something which, because of our strong partnership approach, we can actively work to achieve in Lincolnshire. A significant amount of funding has been secured to focus this priority.

**Move On** - Move On is an overarching theme to our strategy with the aim of providing accessible and supported pathways to independent living for all service users and encouraging future independence.

## **6.1 Prevention**

Housing Advice Teams prevent homelessness through a number of different methods and projects.

The prevention approach has resulted in a reduction in homelessness acceptances across Lincolnshire. By focusing on homelessness prevention we can reduce costs for agencies and households, reduce adverse social and environmental impacts on our communities and we can build prosperous and sustainable communities.

The prevention approach is adaptive and flexible and allows for anticipating and responding to change. Given the changing economic climate, challenges of welfare and policy reform, we will need to continue to find innovative ways to prevent homelessness in partnership to maximise resources.

### **Current provision around prevention**

#### **Housing Advice**

Proactive and readily available housing advice is the first step in preventing homelessness. Housing Advice Teams across Lincolnshire are available to offer advice and assistance to help customers either remain in their existing accommodation or where that is not an option look to secure alternative accommodation. It may also be possible to delay an imminent loss of accommodation to prevent homelessness and instead, structure a move to alternative accommodation. The advice is given through offering a housing options interview. By using this approach Housing Advice Teams can resolve conflict, negotiate with landlords, offer information and advice on the private rented sector, make an application for social housing, identify eligibility for financial assistance and signpost to other agencies. This process also acts as an early warning sign to whether a statutory homeless duty is owed. If this has been identified a duty to investigate will be triggered and a decision made under the homelessness legislation. Housing Advice Teams will at the same time work with the customer to try to find a solution to prevent them from becoming homeless.

#### **Discretionary Housing Payment [DHP]**

The provision of DHP allows payments to be made to top up a temporary shortfall for a person in receipt of housing benefit and/or council tax benefit to prevent homelessness. Each benefit department is allocated funding each

year to help people who qualify for housing or council tax benefit, but are having trouble paying their rent or council tax.

Housing Advice Teams and housing benefit departments will need to consider a partnership approach when awarding DHP to prevent homelessness. DHP payments will not meet all shortfalls due to the number of people that will be affected by the welfare reform changes, therefore to take account of increased demand a common approach will need to be adopted. For further information on DHP's in your area please contact your Local Council.

### **Debt Advice**

Debt can severely restrict the ability for a household to access accommodation especially in the private rented sector. Similarly, debt can impact on a household's ability to maintain their accommodation. Through advice and signposting to specialist debt advice services; both locally and nationally and signposting to Housing Benefit teams, Housing Advice Teams can ensure that customers are receiving the financial advice they require and are claiming what they are entitled to. Debt advice has been the most successful and widely used homelessness prevention tool in Lincolnshire during 09/10 and 10/11.

### **East Lindsey Pilot for 16/17 year olds**

East Lindsey District Council offer supported housing for 4 young people with complex needs. Self contained units are leased from New Linx Housing Trust and managed by ELDC. Units to date are situated in Louth and Mablethorpe which meet local need. Support is intensive and needs-led and focused on learning the necessary skills to live independently - particularly managing money. Emphasis is put on training and community involvement e.g. volunteering and work experience.

### **Access to Social Housing**

#### **Housing Register**

Each Local Authority has a local housing register as a means to allocate social housing. For some authorities this is through a traditional points based system whilst others have adopted banding schemes where applicant's needs are prioritised through a choice based lettings approach.

#### **Boston Borough Council**

- CBL scheme operated and managed by Boston Mayflower.
- City of Lincoln Council
  - Currently operates a CBL system.
  - From Summer 2012, will be part of a Central Lincolnshire CBL scheme (with WLDC and NKDC). Acis Group Ltd will also be a partner in the scheme.
- North Kesteven District Council
  - Currently a traditional points based system

- From Summer 2012, will be part of a Central Lincolnshire CBL scheme (with CoLC and WLDC). Acis Group Ltd will also be a partner in the scheme.
- West Lindsey District Council
  - Currently a traditional points based system
  - From Summer 2012, will be part of a Central Lincolnshire CBL scheme (with CoLC and NKDC). Acis Group Ltd will also be a partner in the scheme.
- East Lindsey District Council
  - CBL scheme operated and managed by New Linx Housing Trust.
- South Kesteven District Council
  - Operates a points based system
- South Holland District Council
  - Operates a points based system

### **Housing Benefit Payments**

Lincolnshire Authorities have informal arrangements with their respective Housing Benefit teams to ensure that claims are processed as quickly as possible and direct payments are made to private sector landlords as required particularly for vulnerable households. This can be particularly important in minimising arrears and where private landlords are reluctant to take on tenants.

### **Housing Related Support**

Floating Support and Supported Housing is the terminology used across the county to refer to specific support that is offered to help people live independently through support at home and through accommodation based supported housing schemes.

#### **- Floating Support**

Floating support schemes help people live independently on their own. Households will receive practical housing related support and will gain the skills required to maintain their own tenancy.

#### **- Supported Housing**

Lincolnshire Public Health Directorate funds short term supported housing, where accommodation and floating support are delivered through one service. A Support Worker will offer support for up to 2 years depending on the level of support required to move on to independent living.

### **Mediation**

Housing Advice Teams across the county informally mediate between parties to prevent someone becoming homeless. Home visits play an important part

in this process. Mediation has been a vital tool in assisting 16/17 year olds to remain in the family home.

- **Family Group Conferencing** is available through Lincolnshire County Council to mediate and resolve any family conflict. Housing Advice Officers are also trained in mediation skills.

### **Money Advice Service**

City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven have Welfare Advisors who provide advice and assistance on income maximisation, budgeting and debt management to residents whose debts and/or living costs are becoming difficult to manage.

### **Mortgage Rescue Scheme [MRS]**

The Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme is a targeted homelessness prevention tool that provides an additional safety net for vulnerable households at risk of repossession. In partnership with the Local Authority a designated Registered Provider who is an elected MRS Champion may step in to buy all or part of the property allowing a family to stay in their home providing they meet the eligibility criteria.

### **Negotiating with Landlords**

Due to a lack of social housing the private rented sector is sometimes the main option available for many seeking accommodation. Due to the cost of moving into this sector coupled with landlords being unwilling to accept those on housing benefit and rent restrictions for those aged under 25, it is often not an accessible or affordable option. Housing Advice Teams are able to negotiate with landlords and can arrange where appropriate for housing benefit to be paid straight to the landlord. Legal advocacy may be used when considering prosecuting for illegal eviction.

### **Nightstop**

East Lindsey and South Holland operate a Nightstop scheme that provides support to young people in need of emergency accommodation. The scheme is open to those aged between 16 and 25 and provides accommodation with a host family for up to 5 nights in East Lindsey and 3 nights in South Holland. This enables a young person to be safe and in a friendly environment whilst allowing agencies time to find more permanent accommodation or negotiate with parents for the young person to return to home.

### **Preventing Homelessness Grant**

Each authority receives an annual grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government [dCLG] to prevent and tackle homelessness. This is known as the 'Preventing Homelessness Grant', whilst it is no longer ring-fenced it is expected that it will be allocated to homelessness prevention. On a day to day basis Lincolnshire authorities use their Homelessness Prevention Grants in a variety of different ways to prevent households from becoming homeless. In some areas the grant is used to fund commissioned services for example debt advice services, emergency accommodation facilities and the

homelessness prevention focussed theatre production delivered in schools by Zest Theatre.

Local authorities can use this funding in innovative ways to include hire of skips and deep housing cleans to prevent homelessness.

### **Pre action Protocol**

The Ministry of Justice Pre action Protocol set out the steps mortgage lenders must go through before seeking possession of a property to ensure that repossession is a last resort. Mortgage lenders are required to notify local authorities of pending repossession hearings. Through this approach Housing Advice Teams are able to make a direct offer of support to the owner occupiers to assist in preventing homelessness. This has increased early intervention for home owners in housing need and has been a useful pathway for households to access support and in some instances, financial support.

### **Partnership Working with Children's Services**

Lincolnshire authorities have worked in partnership with Children's Services to develop a protocol to outline the approach to be taken to tackling and preventing homeless 16/17 year olds. Continuation of this work will develop with the appointment of a County Youth Housing Coordinator to lead the development of a protocol and joint action plan to address the Youth Housing Pathway in Lincolnshire.

Lincolnshire authorities and Children's Services jointly commission a youth homelessness drama where Year 11 pupils across Lincolnshire discover the homeless truths through a hard hitting touring drama production "Until it's Gone". It is based on true stories of young people facing homelessness in Lincolnshire. The production was written and delivered by Zest Theatre in conjunction with the Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group to specifically tackle issues that are common in Lincolnshire.

### **Preventing Repossession Fund**

dCLG has allocated a minimum of £30,000 grant funding to each Local Authority to stabilise a household's financial situation to prevent repossession through mortgage or rent arrears.

Support can be offered through either a grant or interest free loan, brokering, and facilitating access to MRS.

Funding is only provided where it is sustainable for the household to afford their accommodation in the longer term and funding is capped at £5,000 per household. Lincolnshire authorities received an allocation in 2011/12 and also 2012/13.

### **Rent Deposit Scheme**

Lincolnshire authorities have in place deposit schemes which allow customers in housing difficulty, homeless or threatened with homelessness to access housing in the private rented sector. Assistance is offered from the Local Authorities through either a paper or cash deposit for a limited amount of time enabling the tenant to save for their own deposit through the scheme. Once

the deposit has been approved, an officer will work with the new tenant and the landlord to ensure the tenancy is sustained. This prevention tool is contributing significantly towards successful homelessness prevention. Partner agencies also operate similar schemes.

### **Repossession Court Desk Scheme**

The County Courts across Lincolnshire operate a Court Desk Scheme that gives free advice and representation to people at rent or mortgage possession hearings. Lincolnshire authorities use this tool to suspend the landlord/lender taking possession of the property which allows Housing Advice Teams more time to work with the customer to prevent repossession usually through negotiations with the landlord or lender. A successful prevention would usually involve a payment plan to clear the arrears. At the very least, this service can support households to request that the hearing is adjourned to allow the Local Authority time to work with the household to explore and consider their options.

### **Safe Homes/Sanctuary Scheme**

A Safer Home or Sanctuary Scheme has been developed in all districts to assist those who are affected by domestic abuse. The scheme provides additional security measures to a property such as increased lighting, reinforced doors and window locks. This scheme can help a person feel safer to remain in their own home, if they are no longer living with the perpetrator. Each Local Authority works closely with their local domestic abuse services to provide the client with information about their options focusing on risk and the prevention of further harm. Given that domestic abuse is a key reason for homelessness, services such as this are integral to homelessness prevention.

### **Tenancy Training Course**

West Lindsey District Council is piloting a Tenancy Training Course for young people to improve their options and to address the issues that young people face in sustaining their own tenancies. Preparing young people through training in key areas will help them to prepare for independent living and prevent the loss of a future tenancy. The course focuses on key subjects which have been attributed to tenancy failure, for example budgeting and debt, being a good neighbour and rent and bills. The course also explores and promotes healthy eating, laundry and cooking.

### **West Lindsey Crash bed**

West Lindsey District Council has an emergency bed space called a 'Crash Bed' as part of the districts Foyer provision. The Crash Bed is predominantly designed for young people aged 16/17 year olds threatened with or presenting as homeless. It is designed to be a quick response at the point of crisis whilst work is undertaken by Housing and Children's Services with the family to see if it is possible for the young person to return home if it is safe to do so. If it is not safe for the young person to return home the Crash Bed acts as an introduction to supported housing, making the young person feel more comfortable with a move into supported accommodation.

The crash bed is a short term option which allows the Council to accommodate young people safely without having to access bed and breakfast accommodation.

### **Plans for the future**

It will be necessary to extend and tailor our prevention approach to include non statutory single homelessness and rough sleeping.

Develop a no wrong door policy, through a common understanding of local services by delivering briefings to partners and members regarding a local response to homelessness prevention.

There is a need to support vulnerable households facing repossession through the £19m Preventing Repossession Fund. Facilitating access to the Mortgage Rescue Scheme, and interest free loans to stabilise households financial situation will prevent them from losing their home.

We need to work in partnership with the private rented sector, social landlords and supported accommodation providers to prevent eviction.

We need to explore ways of working with vulnerable and chaotic households to help them sustain future tenancies. Consideration to be given to pre tenancy training to address the risks of tenancy failure and associated homelessness.

Support has to be given to initiatives and develop partnerships to prevent homelessness as a result of those having to flee their home because of violence or the threat of violence.

The commitment to providing quality housing advice, through training, and sharing best practice and networking will continue.

Protocols need to be developed and actioned to ensure planned discharge from hospital and prison.

The Council of Mortgage Lenders estimates that there will be 45,000 repossessions in 2012 which is a 24% increase on the previous year.

“a greater number of stretched households are likely to find it more difficult to cope this year, despite continuing forbearance policies by lenders, as upward pressure on arrears and repossessions will be exacerbated by the weakening employment market”.

Specialist Advisors: Mortgage Rescue Information Guide April 2012

There is the need to ensure Housing Advice Teams are aware of the scope and flexibility within the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and to raise awareness with communities.

It is acknowledged that formal mediation training would benefit the county in the future.

Develop initiatives for delivering the Preventing Repossession Fund.

Review the provision of sanctuary provision and associated costs and outcomes.

Develop effective move on from supported housing.

Support a review of Sanctuary Schemes across Lincolnshire in partnership with Lincolnshire County Council.

The approach to future service provision will be based on shared learning taken from pilot schemes and projects. These will include East Lindsey young persons pilot West Lindsey's tenancy training course, and crash pad and East Lindsey and South Holland's nightstop schemes.

Develop partnerships with children's Services across the county and ensure true partnership working.

We must ensure that we continue to focus on prevention and ensure that those at risk of homelessness or already homeless can access appropriate advice and assistance. This strategy and action plan will help us to achieve this.

## **6.2 Partnership working**

"The most successful action to tackle homelessness is rooted in local communities, local authorities working together with local community groups, charities and businesses".

The Vision to end Rough Sleeping No Second Night Out: Nationwide is a HM Government initiative.

The complexity of homelessness requires innovative partnership working, sharing skills, expertise and supporting one another to prevent and tackle homelessness. Lincolnshire authorities and agencies have a strong track record of working together and this strategy has been developed through a partnership approach.

Through working in partnership much more has been achieved, than working in isolation, expanding knowledge and expertise of partner agencies. Working together also helps to provide higher quality integrated services to clients with multiple needs, as no one agency can meet all needs.

**LCHSG** - The LCHSG, is responsible for the delivery of Lincolnshire's Homelessness Strategy and shares a joint commitment with members to ensure actions of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan are met.

The LCHSG is proud of how it works as a multi disciplinary team, it supports and continually develops its partnerships, ensuring complementary practices and effective communication through monthly meetings. The group is attended regularly by over 25 practitioners and is represented by all seven Local Authorities and Lincolnshire County Council and a diverse range of voluntary and third sector agencies. The group strives to continually develop links and more recently has been joined by providers of newly commissioned services, health service, leaving care service and also includes local authorities from across the Lincolnshire border.

Working across a diverse sub region requires a coordinated approach and commitment from all partners. The LCHSG has been recognised and highlighted as an example of best practice for partnership working by Homeless Link and dCLG, with the LCHSG model now being replicated across other sub regional areas.

In 2012 the LCHSG was nominated for the Local Government APSE Awards for best Partnership Working Initiative – Public/voluntary partnership.

**Best Practice** – The national homelessness charity Homeless Link has praised the work of the LCHSG for it's innovative partnership. East Midlands Regional Manager for Homeless Link recently said;

*“A sign of a caring, tolerant and civilised society is how it treats and cares for its most vulnerable members. I am pleased to say that the partnership in Lincolnshire is a fine example of this through the work it is doing and further planning to do to help and support people who find themselves for a variety of reasons sleeping on the streets. All 7 Local Authorities together with the County Council are working in a real positive and coordinated way through a strong County group namely the Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group (LCHSG) and are very ably supported by a passionate and committed Chair and Sub Regional Homelessness Strategy Project Officer. This County Group is one of the strongest and most organised in the East Midlands region...This LCHSG partnership is unique in the East Midlands region and one of the better one's nationally! I regularly use the LCHSG as a model of good practice when talking about how two tier authorities should work in partnership to develop and deliver real change making services across authority boundaries. Recently at a No Second Night Out Conference both myself and the DCLG Specialist Advisor highlighted the work being done by the LCHSG as good practice and both Derbyshire and Northamptonshire are now considering using the Lincolnshire model for themselves!*

*I have found it a real pleasure to be working with such a forward looking and innovative partnership that really is committed to making a difference to the lives of the most vulnerable amongst us.”*

Mohammad Sabeel

**Resources and Funding** – working in partnership means that we can effectively pool skills resources and increase our ability to achieve more.

**Homelessness Conferences** – are a method used to engage with service providers.

**Local Housing/Homelessness Forums** – provide a variety of different functions, and opportunities for discussing local homelessness issues, communicating relevant legislative changes, sharing best practice, service information and promoting awareness of new initiatives.

**Improved partnerships between district housing authorities and children services teams** – Housing and Children’s Services came together for joint training to improve the accommodation options for 16/17 year olds across Lincolnshire.

**Strategic and Operational links** – The LCHSG has links with Homeless Link through the Regional Manager for East Midlands and with dCLG through the Specialist Advisor for the East Midlands.

**Joint Commissioning** – is an ideal opportunity to work together where departments share a similar focus to prevent homelessness. The LCHSG already recognises this and jointly commissions with Children’s Services a youth theatre production delivered to schools with the aim of preventing youth homelessness. Additionally, a Youth Housing Coordinator has also been jointly appointed to improve outcomes for young people at risk of homelessness.

**Sub Regional Officer** – The successes of LCHSG and of Lincolnshire in delivering outcomes can be attributed in no small part to the work of the groups strategy coordinator. This role is jointly funded by the seven Lincolnshire Housing Authorities and demonstrates commitment to effective joint working. The groups coordinator, under the steer and dedication of the groups Chair and with the support of all partners has driven forward the actions of Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2012 and coordinated the development and delivery of Lincolnshire’s Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016.

### **Plans for the future**

The LCHSG will continue to work as a multi disciplinary partnership to achieve positive outcomes to support homeless and vulnerable people. New partnerships will be forged and existing ones developed with health, mental health, Jobcentre Plus, Families Working Together, and older persons.

Actions will be delivered through the group forums to develop and approve partnership working at county and district level to create opportunities to maximise benefits to homeless households.

Support will be given to the continuation of the group coordinator.

All of the local forums reviewed and aligned to reflect the priorities of the LCHSG and ensure that the actions in the strategy are jointly owned and implemented.

Commissioning new prevention options such as supported lodgings scheme, and the youth theatre production Zest.

### **6.3 Welfare and Policy Reform**

There is an unprecedented amount of policy and economic change that will impact on homelessness during the life of this strategy. Preparing for the impact of welfare and policy reform will be a key priority for Lincolnshire.

The Localism Act 2011 will bring local authorities more freedom and flexibility in the allocation of social housing through being able to reorganise how housing registers are managed to reflect local need.

The private rented sector will be able to be used to bring the main homelessness duty to an end. These changes will enable local authorities across Lincolnshire to make flexible decisions on accommodation and whether the need can be met adequately without the offer of social housing. In adopting this new approach the valuable resource of social housing will be freed up for those in the greatest need.

Registered Providers will be able to create new forms of tenure. Tenancies for life for new social housing tenants can be replaced by fixed term flexible tenancies of 2, 5 or 10 years renewable depending on household circumstances. Local Authorities in Lincolnshire will need to develop Local Tenancy Strategies with Registered Housing Providers in their area to support this.

Benefits of flexible tenancies;

- A better use of social and affordable housing to more effectively address housing need
- A better use of social and affordable housing to reduce cost
- Increased local and customer accountability for the use of social and affordable housing
- A better use of social and affordable housing to contribute to sustainable community outcomes

**The Welfare Reform Act [March 2012]** - will introduce a wide range of initiatives to make tax benefits and tax credit fairer and simpler, with the overarching emphasis of getting people back into work, and making work pay. However, the relevant Housing Benefit changes that are likely to have a negative impact on homelessness are;

**Change to the Shared Room Rate** – from April 2012 those under 35 will only be eligible for housing benefit to rent a room in shared accommodation. This

will have a large impact across Lincolnshire due to the lack of single bed properties and lack of shared accommodation.

**Change to Local Housing Allowance Rates [LHA]** – from April 2012, LHA rates will be increased in line with the Consumer Price Index instead of market rents in each area. (Maximum Housing Benefit is the level of rent or applicable LHA rate which ever is the lower.) This will mean benefit claimants will only be able to afford 1 in 3 properties in the private rented sector. The effective change is that households may have a shortfall in available funds to pay rent. Raising awareness of these changes to those affected will be essential, Discretionary Housing Payments may be able to assist with short term shortfalls.

From April 2012, a size criteria will apply in the social rented sector (eg council and housing association properties) for working age tenants replicating the size criteria that applies to housing benefit claimants in the private sector under LHA rules. This means that people living in houses larger than they need (under occupiers) will have to move somewhere smaller or make up the difference in rent because their Housing Benefit will be reduced. There will likely be a 14% cut for under occupying by one bedroom and a 25% for under occupying by 2 or more bedrooms.

**Capping Local Housing Allowance** – households with 5 or more bedrooms will only be able to claim up to the maximum of a four bed property. This means that large families renting in the private rented sector may have a shortfall in rent if they are living in a property with more than 4 bedrooms.

**Universal Credit** – will bring households benefit payment including housing cost into one single payment for people of working age. Vulnerable groups will be responsible for managing their own money, which could result in rent arrears and priority debts.

**The Benefit Cap** – a total cap of £500 per week will be applied to the total amount of benefit that working age people can receive including housing cost to prevent workless families from receiving more than average working families. Housing Advice Teams will have an important role in supporting and advising households subject to change in their circumstances, by helping to negotiate rent reductions, and moves to more affordable accommodation.

### **Plans for the future**

Need to communicate locally and develop a robust communications plan.

One of the main reasons for homelessness across Lincolnshire is the ending of Assured Shorthold Tenancies in the private rented sector. In recognition of this there is a need to address tenancy security and reduce the number of households becoming homeless from private rented properties. Supporting good quality private sector accommodation will help towards sustaining tenancies and reduce the number of households leaving unsuitable accommodation due to disrepair and neglect.

Reductions in housing benefit may not mean that accommodation is unaffordable for every household affected however timely advice, preparation and joint working will reduce pressure on housing services to provide DHP's to cover the shortfall or to source alternative accommodation. It is important to communicate the right information at the right time to tenants, and to offer tailored support for those who need it.

Through the action plan Local Authorities will take the lead role to minimise the impacts of housing benefit changes at a local level. This will require close partnership working between housing teams, and housing benefit teams. Partnerships with housing and support providers will also be important.

Utilising the resource of empty properties will become increasingly important in developing additional options for homeless households.

## **6.4 Young People**

The consultation process to develop Lincolnshire's Homelessness Strategy 2012 – 2016 identified young people as the service user group most vulnerable to homelessness across Lincolnshire due to difficulties in accessing suitable affordable accommodation, and lack of service provision together with the need to develop skills to maintain a tenancy.

The issues facing young people are also compounded by widespread funding cuts, reductions in services, and changes to the welfare system. There is a clear need to emphasise this service user group as a priority.

The cuts in welfare benefits have hit young people in a number of ways. Parents are finding their entitlement could fall if they have grown up children staying on longer in the family home and are therefore more likely to ask them to leave. Difficulties for young people can also be seen with the growing problem of youth unemployment and reductions in the benefits young people can claim for themselves.

Consistently, one of the main reasons for youth homelessness across Lincolnshire is that parents are no longer willing or able to accommodate them. This demonstrates the need for a focus on preventing homelessness and creating sustainable housing options for young people.

### **Partnership working to meet the needs of 16/17 year olds at risk of homelessness**

Children's Services and Housing Authorities are committed to working together to meet the needs of young people across Lincolnshire and will support families to stay together where it is safe to do so. Youth homelessness will be addressed through developing a clear pathway out of homelessness and by establishing actions along this pathway to help us improve services.

This pathway and action plan will focus on 5 key areas;

- Underpinning Strategic Priorities
- Early Intervention and Prevention
- Prevention at the Point of Crisis
- Support and Stabilisation
- Resettlement

**Strategic approach** – a County Youth Housing Coordinator post has been created to work in partnership with Housing and Children Services and bring teams closer together to improve services for homeless 16/17 year olds.

**Understanding youth homelessness** - is key to ensuring that we have a good understanding of the causes of youth homelessness and the needs of young people and their families that we come into contact with.

**Accommodation Provision** – Lincolnshire Authorities believe bed and breakfast accommodation is not suitable for young people and are committed to developing greater volume and diversity in emergency and longer term accommodation options.

### **Plans for the future**

There is currently a protocol in place between Children's Services and Lincolnshire Housing Authorities however, further development is needed to enhance working practices.

### **6.5 Rough Sleeping**

*Homelessness is not just a problem of scale. It's also a problem of complexity – no two people lose their home for the same reason. They all have different life stories. For some it's a dramatic change like losing a job, or leaving the armed service. For others a problem with drugs or alcohol. In some cases family breakdown or mental illness. For many, it's a combination of all of these.*

### **Vision to end Rough Sleeping No Second Night Out: Nationwide - HM Government**

This statement expresses the complexity of homelessness and demonstrates why it is so important to work together; sharing skills, expertise and supporting one another, to tackle complex issues to meet the needs of each person and household in need of our services.

Lincolnshire is a county of contrasts with pockets of wealth however, equally there are pockets of deprivation including people who are sleeping rough.

The 2011 Autumn Rough Sleeper Return recorded 46 people sleeping rough across Lincolnshire and Rutland.

In September 2010 the Government overhauled the way Local Authorities assess the number of people sleeping rough. To accurately assess the scale of the problem the definition of rough sleeping was widened.

People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or “bashes”).

All Local Authorities are now required to provide a street count or an estimate following consultation with local homelessness agencies to assess the number of people sleeping rough in their area on a single night between 1<sup>st</sup> October and 30<sup>th</sup> November each year.

**Funding** - In March 2011 the sub region of Lincolnshire and Rutland were granted £70,000 from the dCLG to tackle the issue of rough sleeping. £20,000 was allocated to support the Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI) in the districts of Boston and South Holland and £50,000 was allocated to develop a countywide approach to tackling rough sleeping.

Lincolnshire and Rutland commissioned a partner agency to actively reduce rough sleeping across Lincolnshire and Rutland.

To bolster the initial £50,000 grant funding an innovative approach was applied to extend the funding, through supporting a bid to the Homelessness Transition Fund. This was successful and in December 2011 Framework were awarded £247,111 over three years which will ensure the sustainability of the project.

The project will develop a rough sleeper street outreach service specifically targeting the principles of the Government’s vision to end rough sleeping; ‘No Second Night Out Nationwide’ which pledges to ensure;

- No-one new to the streets should spend a second night out
- No-one should live on the streets
- No-one should return to the streets once they have been helped off the streets
- No-one should arrive on the streets.

The project aims to;

- Encourage members of the public to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough.
- Help rough sleepers to access a place of safety where their needs can be quickly assessed and they can receive advice on their options.
- Assist rough sleepers to access emergency accommodation and other services, such as healthcare, if needed.
- Reconnect rough sleepers back to their local communities unless there is a good reason why they cannot return.

## **Plans for the future**

dCLG has made £20 million available to Local Authorities to ensure front line provision to prevent homelessness for non priority households and to further enhance provision to end rough sleeping.

The sub region of Lincolnshire and Rutland has received an allocation of £259,000 to develop initiatives which will include;

- Tailored advice and assistance as appropriate to prevent or resolve homelessness, also to be clearly set out in writing for the customer
- An offer of suitable accommodation if required
- Access to / linked into any additional support needed

As a requirement of this funding the dCLG require an action plan setting out what actions will be taken to prevent non priority single homelessness and rough sleeping. The rough sleeper priority in this strategy dovetails with this objective, and meets the requirement to produce an action plan around this service user group. Therefore the actions for this specific funding will be combined within the rough sleeper priority.

We need to be able to identify new rough sleepers and reconnect them to their communities. To do so we will need to develop a Rough Sleeper and Outreach Service and rough sleeper reporting mechanism to operate across Lincolnshire and Rutland 2012 – 2015.

There is a need to facilitate access into the private rented sector through partnership working with private landlords and explore options for development of a specific rent deposit scheme for non priority households and rough sleepers.

It is recognised that Rough sleepers tend to gravitate towards Boston, East Lindsey and Lincoln, and therefore resources will be targeted towards reducing rough sleeping in these hotspot areas. However, all Lincolnshire authorities including Rutland will benefit from the project to reduce rough sleeping in their districts.

## **6.6 Move On**

Move On is the overarching theme of our strategy with the aim of providing accessible and supported pathways to independent living for all service users and encouraging future independence.

Housing related support continues to be provided through floating support services or through accommodation based supported housing schemes.

Short term supported housing schemes funded by Lincolnshire Public Health Directorate (Supporting People) provide support for individuals for up to 2 years. The aim of the services is to support individuals to move on to independent living or increase their ability to live independently.

The Lincolnshire Public Health Directorate commissions short terms accommodation services for a number of client groups;

- Young people at risk
- Young people with complex needs
- Single homeless with support needs
- Homeless families with support needs
- People with substance misuse problems
- Women fleeing domestic abuse
- People with mental health problems
- Offenders/those at risk of offending
- Teenage parents

Following the Comprehensive Spending Review [2010] the levels of funding has reduced across a number of public services. The budget for housing related support services in Lincolnshire will see a year on year decrease from £19.8m in 2010/11 to a planned £15.1m in 2013/14. This reduction in funding highlights why the strategy needs to continue to inform and shape the commissioning of any new or existing services to meet the needs of homeless households across Lincolnshire.

The demand for accommodation to enable move on from supported housing to the social or private rented sector is high. Each local authority has specific challenges in accessing move on accommodation (low local housing allowance rates, availability, poor quality, limited security of tenure, environmental restrictions on planning, tenancy sustainment and churn in the private rented sector).

Analysis of move on data has shown particular barriers for young people and single people with support needs.

### **Future Plans**

We need to work together to increase accommodation options for young people.

We need to extend prevention initiatives to include non statutory single homeless households.

Good quality affordable, safe housing is essential to our wellbeing and working together to address barriers to move on.

## 7.0 Resources and funding

Our future long term strategy will need to focus more heavily on the prevention of homelessness and being innovative in our joint working to tackling and preventing homelessness. It is imperative that we have sufficient resources in the Homelessness Services across Lincolnshire to respond to this demand.

The resources to deliver the strategy to prevent and tackle homelessness will primarily come from dCLG Homelessness Prevention Grant and Lincolnshire Public Health Funding.

Lincolnshire authorities have seen almost a 50% increase in their Homelessness Grant for 2009/10. This level of grant is guaranteed for 2012/13 and is likely to be set at a similar level for 2013/14 and 2014/15. Although all grants remain un-ring fenced, the Government has made a clear commitment to protecting and increasing the grant for Homeless prevention and is keen to see the grant used for this purpose.

The table below shows the Prevention Grants that were paid to Lincolnshire Authorities during the life of the strategy 2008 – 2012 and for the current financial year.

Local Authority	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Amount Retained 2012/13
Boston	£40,000.00	£41,050.00	£61, 000	£61,000.00	£61,000.00	Full Grant
East Lindsey	£50,000.00	£51,050.00	£77,000.00	£99,000.00	£99,000.00	Full Grant
City of Lincoln	£72,000.00	£73,050.00	£73,050.00	£130,270	£130,270	Full Grant
North Kesteven	£55,000.00	£56,050.00	£78,470.00	£78,470.00	£78,470.00	Full Grant
South Holland	£45,000.00	£46,050.00	£46,050.00	£78,470.00	£78,470.00	£48,000
South Kesteven	£55,000.00	£56,050.00	£56,050.00	£106,470.00	£106,470.00	Full Grant
West Lindsey	£30,000.00	£31,050.00	£64,470.00	£64,470.00	£64,470.00	Full Grant

In addition to the preventing homelessness grant, each local authority has also received grant funding with the specific purpose of preventing repossessions in their district.

<b>Local Housing Authority Name</b>	<b>Preventing Repossession Fund allocation</b>	<b>Court Desk allocation</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Boston	£30,000	£18,500	£48,500
East Lindsey	£50,314	£0	£50,314
Lincoln	£30,000	£18,500	£48,500
North Kesteven	£30,000	£0	£30,000
South Holland	£36,742	£0	£36,742
South Kesteven	£67,843	£0	£67,843
West Lindsey	£30,000	£0	£30,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£274,899</b>	<b>£37,000</b>	<b>£311,899</b>

Further Grant funding from dCLG may be received to deliver specific projects throughout the life of the strategy.

## **8.0 Monitoring of the strategy**

The Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group (LCHSG) is the body that brings together agencies across Lincolnshire that support homeless and vulnerable people and will deliver and monitor the actions of the strategy.

The LCHSG will re-establish and refocus local homelessness forums. Groups will focus on local homelessness issues and work towards achieving the relevant strategic priorities outlined in the action plan.

The strategy covers a five year period and (2012 – 2016). To ensure that the strategy is relevant and meaningful in preventing homeless across Lincolnshire additional actions may evolve and be integrated into the existing action plan to ensure a flexible approach.

Review of achievements against the strategy and action plan will be monitored annually by the Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group.

Homelessness Strategy monitoring mechanisms;

Lincolnshire County Homelessness Group – monthly meetings

Local homelessness forums

e-Newsletter

Action plan update – Annually

Performance measures – P1E Statutory Homelessness data



**LCHSG** Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy Group is the body that brings together agencies across Lincolnshire to support homeless and vulnerable people and deliver the actions of the strategy

**DCLG** Department for Communities and Local Government

**Registered Providers** are independent Housing Associations registered with the Homes and Communities Agency

**Nightstop** emergency housing for young people

**Move On** a move from supported housing to independent living

**Foyer** affordable and safe accommodation for young people linked to employment and training opportunities.

**No wrong door** – an approach to ensure all partners are working together and the applicant only has to approach one agency for all available support

## **11.0 Useful Links and References**

The National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS) <http://www.nhas.org.uk>  
Offers advice agencies the specialist support and professional resources to give appropriate and accurate housing advice

Homelessness Link <http://homeless.org.uk> offers advice agencies specialist support and professional resources

Guidance to Children's Services and district housing authorities about Provision of Accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and /or require accommodation  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelesssixteenseventeen>

[Vision to End Rough Sleeping](#) - No second night out nationwide July 2011

Rough Sleeping Returns - This release provides national and regional information on rough sleeping counts and estimates carried out by local authorities between 1<sup>st</sup> October and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/roughsleepingautumn2011>