

# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 - 2031

## Public Consultation Report



# Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031, Public Consultation Report

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# 1 - Overview

It is a statutory requirement set by Government to update a Homelessness Strategy every 5 years. The council Homelessness Strategy ended in 2025. We have combined our Homelessness Strategy with our Rough Sleeping Strategy to create a comprehensive, joined up approach to reducing the threat of homelessness within our city.

The purpose of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025–2030 is to set out Norwich City Council’s long-term approach to preventing homelessness, reducing rough sleeping, and improving access to safe, suitable, and sustainable housing. It is built around key legislation and guidance, such as the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017), the Domestic Abuse Act (2021), Homelessness Code of Guidance, Governments National Plan to End Homelessness.

Housing pressures are rising. In 2024-2025 the council owed over 1000 clients a homelessness duty, as they were either at risk of becoming, or were acutely, homeless. Alongside this, housing related support, funded by Norfolk County Council, has reduced, which has impacted over 200 supported accommodation bed spaces in Norwich. As such, the council and charity partners must jointly work to provide better outcomes for those presenting as at risk of becoming homeless, or who are currently homeless.

By updating our strategy, we aim to support people earlier and more effectively. Where homelessness does occur, it should be rare brief and non-reoccurring

## 2 - Consultation Approach

The Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Strategy was run in conjunction with the Home Options policy public consultation between 10 November and 12 December 2025. An online survey was hosted on Get Talking Norwich, the council's consultation and engagement platform (<https://gettalking.norwich.gov.uk/>).

A dedicated project page was created for the consultation which, which included a narrative of the strategy, the survey, and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy draft, the Strategy Action Plan draft, and an overview of the evidence review that informed the strategy.

The consultation was additionally shared with relevant stakeholders via email.

In addition to this in September 2025, housing staff delivered a presentation at a lived-experience workshop organised by Shelter Norfolk, which was also attended by service users and support workers from The Magdalene Group.

### 3 - Lived Experience Feedback

The main purpose of the session was to listen directly to the voices of people who have experienced our services first-hand. Their insights are an essential component in shaping an effective homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. Individuals with lived experience bring a depth of understanding, context and realism that cannot be obtained from policy papers or service data alone.

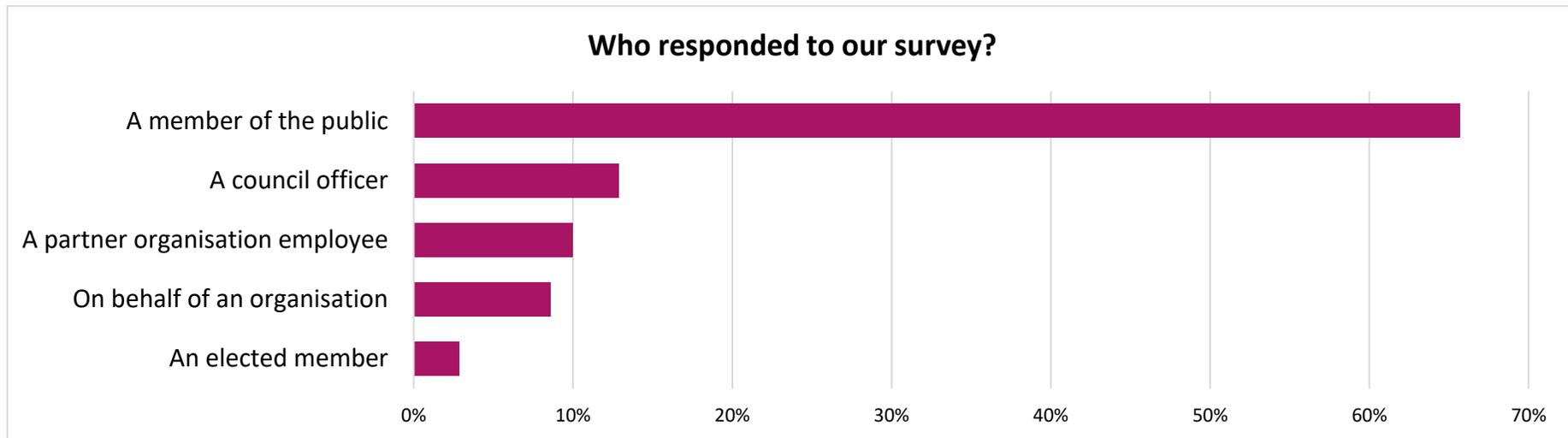
By actively involving people who have faced housing instability and homelessness, we gain expertise rooted in real-world experience, ensuring that our policies and interventions are not only evidence-based but also inclusive and genuinely person-centred.

Some of the perspectives from this session are quoted below -

- Support is limited for people who don't meet specific "at risk" or "vulnerable" criteria, including those leaving custody.
  - The private rented sector (PRS) is unstable, with poor quality standards and high rents making work unaffordable for hostel residents.
  - Temporary accommodation (TA) can feel unsafe due to transient populations, drug use, intimidation, and insufficient provider support.
  - Better tenancy preparation, tenancy sustainment support, and clearer property adverts are needed.
  - Rough sleeping figures may be underreported due to lack of night-time outreach
  - There is low awareness of existing support (e.g. direct Universal Credit payments to landlords, or available agencies/community support).

## 4 - Consultation Responses

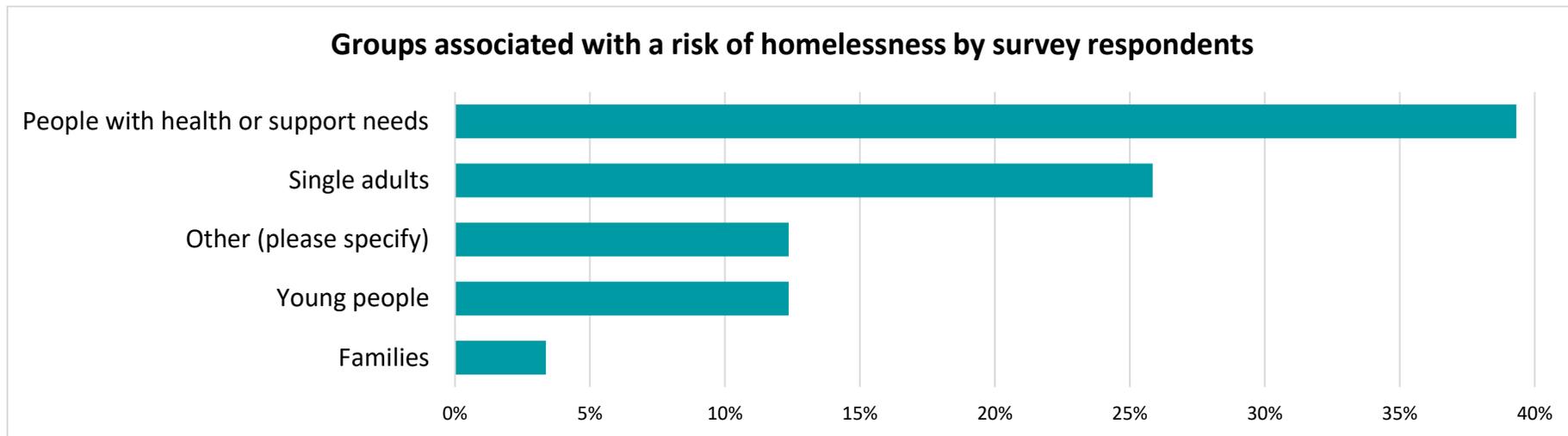
72 individuals responded to our survey, consisting of 70 online and 2 email responses, after 332 views of the consultation page online (as of 12.12.2025).



The majority of respondents were members of the public, with a small percentage representing Norwich City council officers, elected members, and employees of partner and other external organisations.

Survey respondents were asked multiple choice questions regarding the strategy, with additional space left for free-text responses.

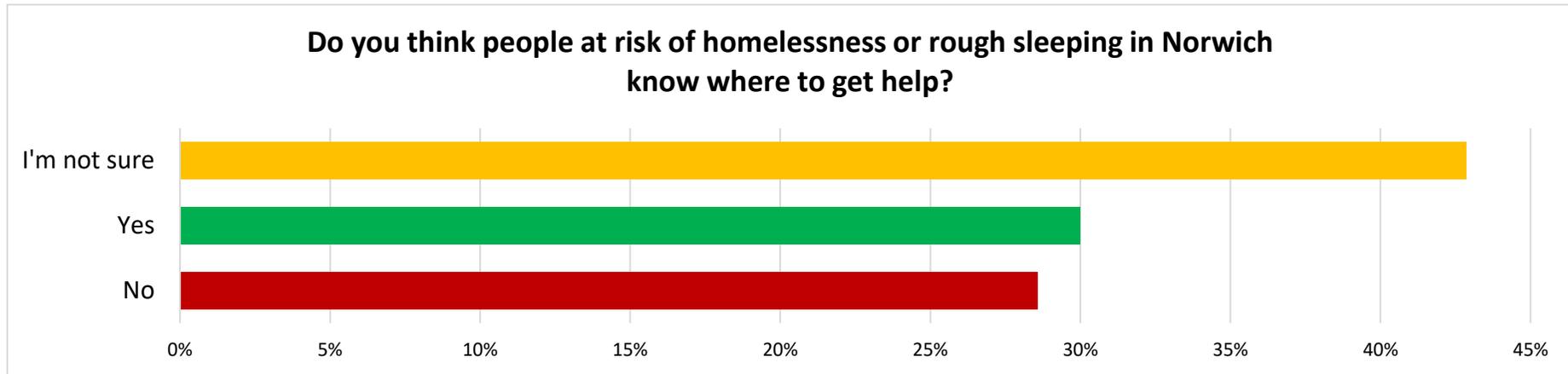
**We asked survey respondents to which groups they believed were at the highest risk of homelessness in Norwich:**



*With the highest number of votes, 39% of respondents believed that people with health or support needs were at an increased risk of homelessness.*

Free-text responses regarding groups associated with a risk of homelessness frequently mentioned the intersection of mental health and substance use that can lead to an increased risk of homelessness, alongside surviving domestic abuse and leaving institutional care.

We asked survey respondents if they believed that people at risk of homelessness in Norwich knew where to get help:



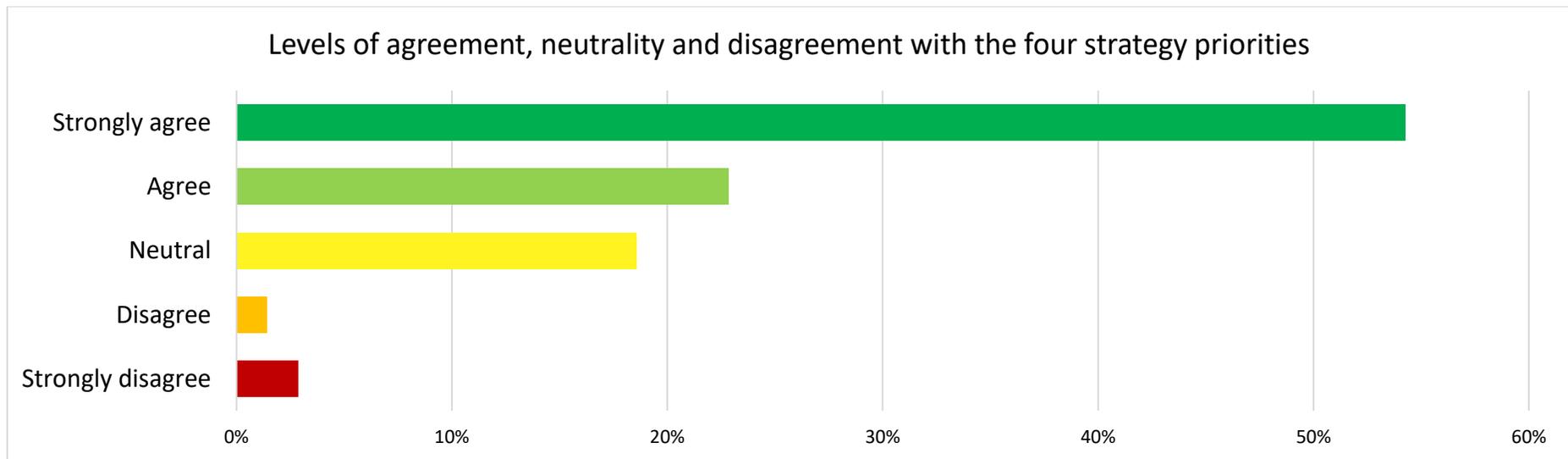
*43% of respondents reported that they weren't sure, 30% reported that they did believe clients would know where to get help, and 29% reported that they did not believe clients would know where to get help.*

## Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Priorities

### Our priorities:

1. Work with partners to end rough sleeping
2. Facilitate access to appropriate accommodation
3. Prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity
4. Develop and sustain partnerships to support our residents

### We asked survey respondents to what extent they agreed with our four strategy priorities:



*Respondents showed a strong agreement with all Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy priorities: 78% strongly agreed or agreed with the priorities stated.*

## Which priority actions are the most important?

### Priority 1 – Work with partners to end rough sleeping

*We want to work with other organisations to help people who are sleeping rough find safe places to stay and get the support they need.*

#### Priority 1 actions voted the most important:

1. Continue to improve 'off the street' accommodation offer
2. Review the Norwich Pathways service to ensure it remains focused, relevant, and aligned with current needs.
3. Work with others to get funding and improve services for people sleeping rough
4. Reduce evictions from supported accommodation

### Priority 2 – Facilitate access to appropriate accommodation

*We aim to help and enable people to access safe, affordable housing.*

#### Priority 2 actions voted the most important:

1. Build more affordable homes that meet local need
2. Explore ways to make best use of Council stock
3. Increase opportunities to increase additional affordable housing
4. Lower the use of pay nightly accommodation, improve and increase temporary accommodation capacity

### **Priority 3 – Prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity**

*We want to work with others to help people stay in their homes or find housing before they reach crisis point.*

#### **Priority 3 actions voted the most important:**

1. Make sure survivors of domestic abuse can get safe housing and long-term support
2. Work with our partners to further develop processes and deliver interventions to prevent homelessness early
3. Help resolve problems between landlords and tenants
4. Help people stay in their homes through tenancy support

### **Priority 4 – Develop and sustain partnerships to support our residents**

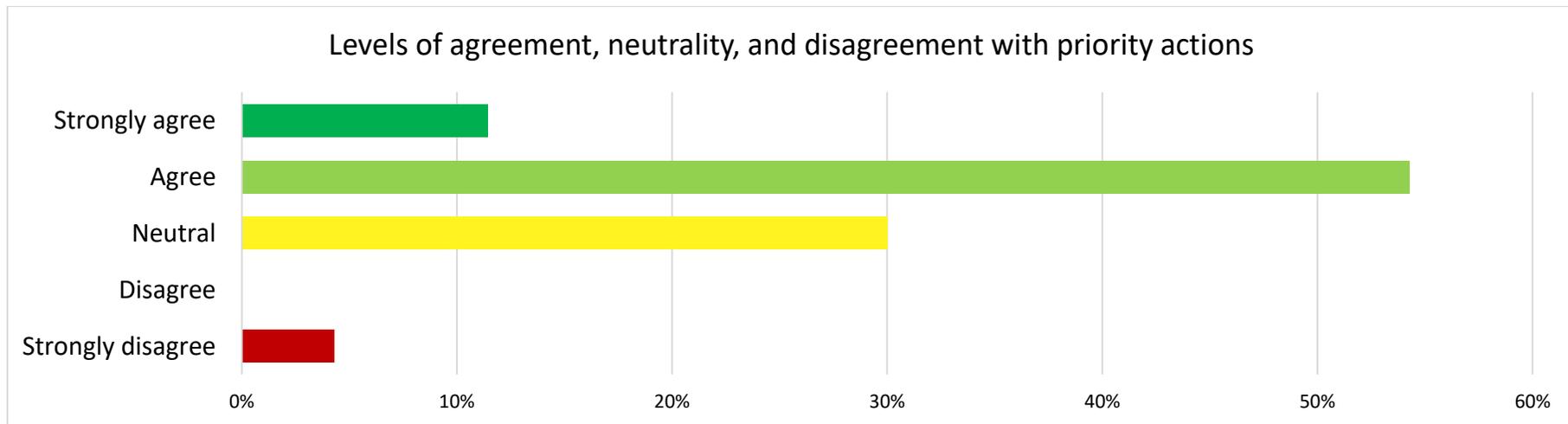
*We want to build strong partnerships with other organisations, so people get the right help at the right time.*

#### **Priority 4 actions voted the most important:**

1. Make sure people leaving institutions such as hospital and prison aren't discharged NFA (no fixed address)
2. Improve how different organisations work together to support people
3. Support joined-up services that focus on people's needs and experiences
4. Share learning and good practice to improve services

## Agreement with priority actions

We asked respondents to which extent they agreed with the actions listed under each of our strategy priorities.



*Respondents showed strong agreement with the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy priority actions: 65% agreed or strongly agreed with the actions stated.*

### Respondents stated that they valued actions regarding:

1. Focused early intervention
2. Targeted support for the most vulnerable groups that are at risk of homelessness, such as young people, care leavers, refugees, and those surviving domestic abuse
3. Joint working between councils and external agencies
4. Support beyond crisis intervention, as currently longer-term support is hard to obtain
5. Sustaining tenancies

## 5 Responding to Comments

### Suggested Priorities

**We asked respondents if there were any priorities they wanted to suggest for our homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. Of 70 survey respondents, 31 gave their insights.**

Responses to submitted priority themes are given below:

**Suggested priority: Improving mental health, substance use, and complex-needs support (5 mentions)**

This included:

1. Providing more support for those with mental health and substance use who present to the council
2. Provide a flexible response for individuals with complex needs

**Our Response:**

1. Housing officers ensure referrals are made to available mental health and substance use support services during their duty to the client. Once accommodated in social housing or the private rented sector, especially vulnerable individuals can be referred to the council's specialist support team, who can ensure referrals to and contact with these services continues to improve client wellbeing, thus facilitating tenancy sustainment and preventing repeat homelessness. We will continue to monitor and adapt this support service to ensure the best possible outcomes.
2. As part of our commitment to delivering a trauma-informed service, council housing officers have completed specialist training designed to strengthen their ability to provide compassionate, flexible support to individuals presenting to the council. This helps ensure that every interaction is sensitive to the needs and experiences of those affected by homelessness.

### **Suggested priority: Supporting youth homelessness and domestic abuse (4 mentions)**

This included:

1. Prioritise prevention of youth homelessness
2. Provide enhanced support for those fleeing domestic abuse
3. Recognise identity-linked (e.g. LGBTQ+) abuse risk, and offer tailored outreach, support and accommodation

### **Our Response:**

1. In 2025 the Housing Options team secured funding to provide a mediation service to intervene and prevent youth homelessness in cases where a family breakdown has occurred and the young person has been told to leave the family home. This is an ongoing project and we are monitoring its success to then determine future investment in the service. We work closely with partners that support under 25 customers including the YMCA and MAP. The council also currently lease some properties to our charity partners. This enables them to deliver accommodation-based support services without the need to acquire or develop their own properties, which can be both time-consuming and costly.
2. The council employs a dedicated Domestic Abuse Housing Officer with extensive knowledge and experience in supporting survivors. This role ensures that individuals receive tailored, trauma-informed housing support. In addition, Pathways Norwich who are commissioned by the council provides specialist support to women via the Madgelane Group to ensure the specific needs of homeless women are met. We are also currently working towards DAHA accreditation (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) is the UK's leading benchmark for housing providers, setting standards for how local authorities,

and homelessness services should effectively identify, respond to, and prevent domestic abuse, ensuring survivors receive safe and consistent support by embedding best practices into their core strategies and operations

3. We recognise that individuals who identify as LGBTIQ+ are at a higher risk of experiencing homelessness or insecure housing compared to those who do not. They often face discrimination and abuse, which can increase the likelihood of developing issues related to substance misuse and mental health.

Where possible, we will continue to monitor the proportion of LGBTIQ+ individuals accessing our homelessness and rough sleeping services and will adapt our services where possible to better meet their needs. In 2026 our ambition is to sign up to LGBTQ+ housing pledge and work towards accreditation which is a framework created by HouseProud and Stonewall Housing for social housing providers to show commitment to LGBTQ+ residents by reviewing policies, improving services, and ensuring safe, inclusive environments, addressing issues like discrimination and lack of visibility through actions like staff training, customer involvement, and promoting LGBTQ+ events

**Strategy Addition:**

- 19.5. We will continue to evaluate and strengthen our domestic abuse response, ensuring that survivors have timely access to safe, stable housing and support that addresses both immediate safety and long-term recovery. Addition: This includes capturing and monitoring the presence of identity-based abuse within our city to further develop and improve our domestic abuse knowledge and responses where possible. In 2026 our ambition is to sign up for Stonewall housing's LGBTQ+ housing pledge and work towards accreditation which is a framework created by HouseProud and Stonewall Housing.

**Action Plan Addition:**

- 3.5. Continue to monitor the proportion of LGBTIQ+ people, individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds, and other groups who may face barriers to accessing public services within our homelessness and rough sleeping services and adapt service delivery where possible to better meet their needs.
- 3.6. Work with partner organisations to monitor and record incidents of identity-based abuse affecting people accessing homelessness services
- 3.7. Achieve the Stonewall LGBTQ+ Housing Pledge

## Responding to other comments

Several respondents provided comments regarding our strategy and how it could be amended. Our responses to their comments are laid out below:

**Comment:** There is no detail as to exactly how the council plans to work with charity partners

**Our response:** The Council has well-established links with charitable and voluntary sector partners. From a homelessness services perspective, we have commissioned the Pathways Norwich consortium since 2018 to support individuals experiencing housing insecurity or rough sleeping. The partnership comprises seven organisations: Shelter, St Martin's, Future Projects, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, YMCA, The Magdalene Group, and The Salvation Army.

Each partner brings specialist expertise to address the complex and multifaceted causes of homelessness and rough sleeping. We recognise that the Council cannot address these challenges in isolation, and Pathways Norwich is a strong example of effective partnership working. We remain committed to maintaining and strengthening this partnership.

In addition, housing officers with specialist roles engage regularly with relevant VCSE partners aligned to their areas of expertise. For example, officers working with people with experience of offending work closely with local organisations that provide targeted support to this group.

We also support co-location at City Hall with some VCSE partners regularly sharing office space within the Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness team. This approach has strengthened working relationships and improved collaboration between organisations.

**Action plan addition:**

- We remain committed to maintaining and strengthening Pathways Norwich service.

**Comment:** Historic behaviours, such as rent arrears and anti-social behaviour, form a barrier to accessing social housing for those living in supported accommodation

**Our response:** As detailed in the council's move on agreement with partner agencies, and within the Home Options policy, clients that can demonstrate they have addressed historic behaviours, and have been able to manage their supported accommodation placement successfully, will be eligible for move-on into social housing.

**Comment:** Supporting people who have or are experiencing homelessness into work is not addressed within the strategy

**Our response:** Norwich city council work with and support various organisations that can offer employment support to those experiencing homelessness such as the Mancroft Advice Project. The council also runs the INTERACT scheme, which provides targeted support to vulnerable residents, and have close working relationships with the Department of Work and Pensions to facilitate employment within the city. Alongside this, Norfolk County Council deliver access-to-employment projects across the county, such as the new Connect to Work scheme, which supports over 4000 vulnerable to gain sustainable employment.

**Comment:** Individuals living in council homes that have spare rooms block the use of this housing for homeless families. These cases should be offered incentives to downsize.

**Our response:** As outlined within the council's Home Options policy, social housing applicants who are under-occupying their property by two or more bedrooms and are willing to move to a significantly smaller accommodation will be placed in gold priority band, substantially improving their chance at obtaining a new social tenancy. The council INTERACT team additionally facilitate downsizing for tenants who require additional support to move properties, enabling their easy transition to a new home, thus freeing up larger homes for families who require them.

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