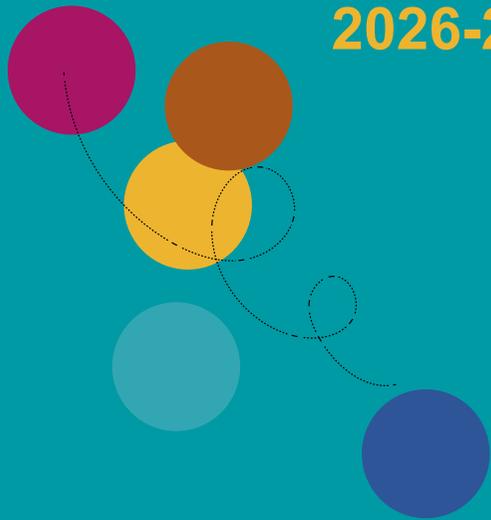




Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2026-2031



Foreword

Homelessness in Norwich extends far beyond rough sleeping. It is an issue that can affect anyone, including families, and it can impact people across all communities in the city. In recent years, the rising cost of living has increased significantly, this has put significant pressure on many households, leading to greater housing insecurity and, as a result more people are turning to the Council for support.

We face a number of national challenges in our efforts to prevent and relieve homelessness and rough sleeping. These include a severe shortage of housing, particularly affordable and social housing, alongside the complex health, social care and wider support needs that often underpin homelessness.

This strategy sets out a renewed approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in Norwich. A stronger focus on prevention is central to delivering effective and sustainable outcomes and aligns with the Government's 'National Plan to End Homelessness' which was published in December 2025.

To be successful we must support households to maintain their existing accommodation, while also helping them to access suitable alternatives including within the private rented sector.

We recognise that the Council cannot deliver these priorities in isolation. Norwich benefits from a strong and dedicated network of partner organisations, and we are committed to working collaboratively with both our partners and people with who have lived experience of homelessness and rough sleeping. Their insights and expertise are vital to ensuring our services remain effective, responsive and inclusive. Alongside strengthening existing partnerships, we will also seek to develop new collaborations that further enhance our collective ability to prevent and relieve homelessness and support the successful delivery of this strategy.

Councillor Beth Jones – Portfolio Holder for Housing

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1. Our Community Led Plan and Focus on Addressing Homelessness

1.1. Norwich City Council's 'We are Norwich' Community-Led Plan was formally adopted in 2024. The consultation process as part of this plan involved over 900 individuals and organisations. The feedback gained from this thorough consultation process helped us determine five priorities:

- 1. An open and modern council**
- 2. A prosperous Norwich**
- 3. A fairer Norwich**
- 4. A climate responsive Norwich**
- 5. A future-proof Norwich**

1.2. Our goal of being an open and modern council is the foundation that supports the other key themes in this document, helping us transform into a fair, thriving city full of ambition.

1.3. The priority of 'a fairer Norwich' within the Plan has the greatest influence on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, although elements of the other priorities also contribute. Key themes emerging from this area that are linked to homelessness and housing include:

- Concerns about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis

- Maintenance of council properties and enhancing our council housing assets
- Issues around housing availability levels of homelessness
- Targeted work focused on the most deprived communities

1.4. The main objectives from this feedback most closely related to homelessness and rough sleeping are ensuring access to good quality homes for all. In the [community-led plan](#), we've outlined a vision of what this could look like.

1.5. There are more affordable homes, and we encourage that new homes across all tenures are built to low or zero carbon standards. Our tenants benefit from high quality repairs and maintenance services, and we have a deliverable retrofitting programme. Homes across the city are warm and in good repair – supporting better health and specific needs. Partnership working, tackling underlying causes, continues to reduce and prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

2. Our Homelessness and rough sleeping priorities

- 2.1. This strategy is shaped around four key priorities that reflect the challenges and opportunities in addressing homelessness and rough sleeping in Norwich. These priorities have been developed by reviewing the impact and effectiveness of outgoing strategies and through consultation with partners from across the city, including people with lived experience of homelessness. This strategy forms the foundation of our commitment over the duration of this strategy.
- 2.2. At the centre of our approach is a commitment to delivering high-quality, person-centred services, with a strong emphasis on early intervention, improving access to appropriate accommodation, and strengthening collaborative partnerships.
- 2.3. We remain focused on the shared goal of ending rough sleeping in Norwich, working collaboratively with our partners and communities. Together, we will take a holistic, preventative, and evidence-informed approach to addressing the complex and evolving nature of homelessness in the city.

We will:

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

3. Priority 1 - Work with partners to end rough sleeping

- 3.1. In developing this strategy, we reflected on whether our vision should be to 'end rough sleeping'. This is our ultimate aspiration, we acknowledge that achieving it may extend beyond the lifetime of this strategy due to complex and often uncontrollable factors. However, we have chosen to set a priority that is ambitious. This ensures every action we take moves us closer to the long-term goal of ending rough sleeping.
- 3.2. We believe that even one person sleeping on the streets is one too many. Moving closer to achieving this priority requires strong partnership working, which is essential to turning ambition into reality. Where rough sleeping does occur, our aim is to ensure it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

4. Prevention

- 4.1. Rough sleeping is the most visible and harmful form of homelessness. The longer someone remains on the streets, the greater the risk of them developing complex and entrenched challenges. Our aim is to prevent and relieve rough sleeping wherever possible by working collaboratively with all relevant partners and agencies in Norwich and across Norfolk. This joined-up approach is essential to reducing and ultimately ending time spent sleeping rough.

5. Norwich Pathways

- 5.1. This initiative was established in 2018 in response to an increasing number of people sleeping rough in the city. Seven local organisations came together to combine their resources, expertise, and experience, aiming to deliver both immediate relief and long-term solutions for people sleeping rough.

- 5.2. A multi-disciplinary team was formed to support individuals experiencing rough sleeping, many of whom face multiple disadvantages and significant barriers to accessing housing and support services.
- 5.3. The team offers support through various stages of a customer's journey, from initial contact with those currently sleeping rough through to helping individuals move into and sustain their own accommodation. This comprehensive approach is designed to prevent repeat homelessness and promote long-term stability. The service draws on a broad range of professional expertise to address both physical and mental health needs, ensuring holistic, person-centred support.
- 5.4. Since 2018, some partners and interventions have changed and evolved to ensure the service remains flexible and responsive. This adaptability allows resources to be directed toward the most pressing local needs while also aligning with changing priorities set by central government.
- 5.5. In early 2025 Rough Sleeping Advisors from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) conducted a review of Pathways. As a result of the review, the advisors put forward some recommendations these include:
 - 5.5.1. Expansion of move on options from supported accommodation and ensure pathway is not solely focused on social housing being the only option.
 - 5.5.2. Expansion of Housing First and housing led initiatives
 - 5.5.3. Develop an offer and agreed plan for people sleeping rough who do not have a local connection to Norwich
 - 5.5.4. Co - location of some support services to enable more partnership working.

5.5.5. Improve data collection and information sharing across Pathways.

5.6. We remain committed to maintaining and strengthening this partnership and the recommendations outlined in the MHCLG report assist with informing future service delivery.

6. Target Priority Group

6.1. The Target Priority Group (TPG) refers to people sleeping rough in the Norwich City Council area who are identified as meeting the criteria below:

6.1.1. They are the furthest away from having their homelessness resolved

6.1.2. They have been in this position for some time

6.1.3. They are likely to remain rough sleeping without bespoke, multi-agency intervention

6.2. The TPG can include people currently sleeping rough or those in off the street settings who are most likely to return to rough sleeping.

6.3. There has been a Housing Assessment Officer (TPG) in post since May 2025 with the specific intention of meeting the needs of this group of people. Through the delivery of assertive outreach, the Housing Assessment Officer provides tailored solutions through assessment, advice and referrals at the client's convenience, and at a location that is preferred and more physiologically informed environment.

6.4. This role is made possible by funding from Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant and allows the officer to develop an in-depth understanding of the individual, which allows them to develop tailored solutions that address an individual's complex needs, and promote self-sufficiency and long-term housing stability.

6.5. Since its inception, this role has already delivered positive outcomes for some of our most vulnerable and entrenched clients. Managing a smaller, though more complex, caseload has enabled the officer to build strong rapport and trust with individuals. Subject to continued funding, we would wish to maintain this role.

7. Reconnections

7.1. As the only city in Norfolk, Norwich attracts people from across the region, the country, and further afield some of whom, unfortunately, sleeping rough. This inward migration places additional pressure on both rough sleeper numbers and the availability of bed spaces within the city's supported housing network.

7.2. Through this strategy, we will continue to work closely with neighbouring councils and partners to develop joint responses to what is often a sub-regional challenge but is most visible on the streets of Norwich.

7.3. A central ambition is to build a clearer understanding of where rough sleepers are arriving from, enabling us to strengthen our reconnection approach while continuing to meet our responsibilities under the Homelessness Reduction Act.

8. Verification

- 8.1. Rough sleeping verification is the process councils use to confirm and record instances of people sleeping rough, providing data to inform support and measure progress. However, it can present a narrow view, as it often misses hidden rough sleepers.
- 8.2. This practice can often miss individuals who do not feel safe 'bedding down' in busier public areas. This practice has been evidenced to unfairly disadvantage women and people who identify as LGBTQ+ who often avoid overt street sleeping due to fear of violence, abuse or exploitation, instead sheltering in hidden or non-traditional places that aren't captured in official counts. A national Women's Rough Sleeping Census found that up to ten times more women are sleeping rough than official figures suggest, because traditional methods miss people who are not visibly 'bedded down' on the streets.
- 8.3. The Government's 'A National Plan to End Homelessness' reinforces the move towards a more needs-based approach for local authorities and promotes the consistent use of the Ending Rough Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool (ERSRAT). We will use this tool alongside traditional verification methods in cases where it is clear that an individual is visibly 'bedded down'.

9. Priority 2 - Support access to appropriate accommodation

10. Temporary Accommodation

10.1. All councils are obligated to provide temporary accommodation (TA) for homeless individuals who have a priority need. This accommodation can include council-owned homes and hostels, Bed and Breakfast (B&B), nightly lets and private rentals. Homelessness is on the rise throughout Norfolk and the East of England. The cost and use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast is high (see table 1), and residents are often housed in this accommodation for extended periods of time sometimes due to availability issues these placements can be out of area.

Year	Number of households placed in TA annually in Norwich
2021-2022	312
2022-2023	319
2023-2024	375
2024-2025	403

Table 1 – Number of people placed in TA annually in Norwich

10.2. We will continue to actively secure additional temporary accommodation options to help meet the growing demand for safe and stable interim accommodation. Temporary accommodation provides essential short-term options for individuals who are awaiting a homelessness decision, as well as for those who have received a positive decision and are waiting to move on to longer-term housing.

10.3. Within the Government's *A National Plan to End Homelessness*, launched in December 2025, there is a clear expectation for local authorities to move away from the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families. The Council is already working with providers to increase the supply of good-quality, locally based temporary accommodation, in line with this direction.

10.4. This approach also aligns with the Government's ambition, set out in section 5.3.2 of the strategy, which states that councils should, wherever possible, place homeless households within their local area, except where there are clear benefits to the individual such as in cases of domestic abuse. Where out-of-area placements are necessary, disruption to health services, education, and essential support networks should be minimised.

11. Supported Accommodation

- 11.1. Within this priority, supported accommodation plays a vital role in providing a safe and stable environment for people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping, particularly those with additional support needs. We will work closely with other councils across Norfolk to develop a coordinated supported accommodation strategy and needs assessment. This will ensure that provision is planned in a consistent, efficient, and equitable way, and that resources are targeted where they can have the greatest impact.
- 11.2. We will also seek to review and develop a shared eviction from hostels protocol, recognising that evictions can often lead to a return to rough sleeping if alternative options are not identified. In 2023-2024, 21% of customers owed a relief duty as a result of eviction from supported housing, this has reduced slightly in 2024-2025 at 16% but still an area that needs examining, which was the second highest reason given within this time period. Alongside this, we will continue to collaborate with partners to review the effectiveness of the move-on agreement.
- 11.3. We will work proactively with supported accommodation providers to enable the expansion of provision where needed. This will include exploring opportunities to lease out our council-owned homes, ensuring that more homes, often not suitable to general-needs housing, can be brought into use. By taking a collaborative and flexible approach, we aim to create a supported accommodation pathway that is responsive, sustainable, and effective in helping people move away from homelessness for good.

12. Access to Private Rented Housing

- 12.1. Access to the private rented sector (PRS) is a key element in broadening housing options for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The PRS can offer a flexible and relatively quick route into settled housing, particularly in areas like Norwich where social housing is in high demand and the housing register is large. However, we recognise that there are often barriers to accessing this market.
- 12.2. To address these challenges, we will work closely with landlords, letting agents, and property managers to build stronger relationships and develop greater trust between the sector and the council. Where appropriate, we will make use of incentive schemes such as rent guarantees, deposit assistance, and targeted landlord support to encourage participation. Alongside this, we aim to provide ongoing tenancy sustainment support, with a particular focus on those who may face additional barriers when moving into PRS. This includes groups such as care leavers, ex-offenders, and refugees. By offering this assistance, we aim to give tenants the best possible chance of retaining their home while reassuring landlords that the right support is in place.
- 12.3. Where possible, we will make use of available funding streams to meet upfront costs that often prevent people from accessing the sector, such as deposits, rent in advance, and essential furnishings.
- 12.4. Our aim is to ensure that the PRS is a realistic and sustainable option. By combining practical financial support with relationship-building and tenancy sustainment measures, we will create a pathway into the private rented sector that works for both tenants and landlords, ultimately helping to prevent homelessness and provide long-term housing stability.

13. Affordable Housing

13.1. The delivery of affordable housing is essential to meeting the needs of those on the housing register. However, it is important to recognise that due to a range of constraints and the legacy of historic government policies, the council is also making use of alternative options to meet its duties, including increasing access to housing within the PRS.

13.2. As of July 2025, there are 3226 households on the housing register in Norwich. Applicants are placed into priority bands emergency, gold, silver, bronze and standard band. Numbers of households in each band are detailed in table 2. Customers are placed into a band primarily based on assessed need, with those in the greatest need receiving the highest priority for social housing.

Band	Number of Customers in Band as of August 2025
Emergency	3
Gold	241
Silver	842
Bronze	191
Standard	1949

Table 2 - Number of Customers on housing register in Norwich broken down into band August 2025

13.3. Affordable housing is defined in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as housing for sale or rent that caters to those whose needs are not met by the open market. This includes housing at social rent, affordable rent, or

intermediate rent, as well as discounted market sales and other affordable routes to home ownership like shared ownership or first homes.

13.4. Since 2020, several factors have contributed to a lower-than-expected delivery of affordable housing. These include the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the introduction of new planning requirements such as Biodiversity Net Gain regulations and Nutrient Neutrality which have contributed to development challenges over recent years.

13.5. Despite these challenges, the council has actively sought ways to boost affordable housing delivery. One key initiative is the Norwich Orwell Partnership, a collaboration through which predominantly brownfield, council-owned land is being transferred to Orwell Housing for development. This supports progress toward a target of delivering 254 new affordable homes annually, as identified in the Greater Norwich Housing Needs Assessment.

13.6. As part of the partnership, the council will retain nomination rights for all new homes built. This ensures that the properties will be allocated to individuals and families on the council's housing register.

14. Priority 3 - Prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity

15. Effective prevention

15.1. The prevention of homelessness is integral to our strategic approach. Taking proactive steps helps reduce the number of people reaching crisis point and lessens the distress felt by those at risk. Crucially, it is a more efficient and cost-effective solution as compared to supporting those experiencing homelessness.

15.2. The Renters' Rights Act improves security and stability for tenants, particularly those at risk of homelessness. This includes developing tenancy engagement initiatives to help individuals understand their rights and responsibilities, sustain their tenancies, and access timely support.

15.3. We will maximise the effective use of available grants and financial assistance schemes to prevent homelessness helping customers secure and maintain stable housing.

15.4. Recognising the unique needs of young people, we will review our recently introduced mediation and conflict-resolution service aimed at preventing family breakdowns a leading cause of youth homelessness.

15.5. Where possible we will continue to invest and expand our specialist housing officers to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable groups, including refugees, ex-offenders, victims of domestic abuse and those with complex support requirements.

16. Tenancy engagement and sustainment

16.1. Tenancy engagement and sustainment are key to preventing homelessness at an early stage. Norwich City Council provides support through a Tenancy Relations Advisor and a Tenancy Coach, offering light-touch guidance to help individuals manage and maintain their homes. Where customers require longer-term or more intensive input, we work with partner organisations in the community to ensure they can access the right support. Additional tenancy relations support is also offered to groups who may be more vulnerable to homelessness or face greater challenges in sustaining a tenancy, such as refugees and ex-offenders. We recognise the value of these interventions and will monitor the effectiveness of these roles to help inform and prioritise future funding decisions.

16.2. Homelessness statistics for 2023–2024 show that the most common reason for people accessing homelessness prevention support was the end of a private rented tenancy, accounting for 39% of cases. This trend continued into 2024–2025, where it remained the leading cause, representing 33% of cases. The majority of these are likely to be the result of ‘no fault’ evictions under Section 21. However, a proportion will also reflect tenants who have fallen into rent arrears, where non-payment has been the primary cause of eviction.

17. Trauma Informed Approach

- 17.1. Many people supported by the Housing Options team have experienced trauma in the past. Trauma-informed training is being delivered to all front-line council staff working within homelessness services to enable their understanding of these experiences and those who have experienced them. To ensure sensitivity to potential trauma-triggers and help prevent re-traumatisation, Housing Options officers will adopt a trauma-informed and where possible a flexible approach when arranging and conducting meetings with those accessing our services.
- 17.2. We will 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.
- 17.3. We will continue to gather and use feedback from partners and people using services to support continuous improvement and inform future service planning, ensuring a trauma-informed approach.

18. Armed Forces and Veterans

- 18.1. Veterans may experience difficulties engaging with, and placing trust in, professionals who lack a military background or an understanding of the distinctive experiences and circumstances associated with armed forces service. Without tailored approaches that acknowledge these experiences, many veterans are at risk of disengaging entirely from support. When faced with the choice between accessing mainstream homelessness services or not engaging at all, a significant proportion may opt for no engagement.

18.2. The Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between the civilian community and the armed forces community in Norfolk, formalising a commitment to treating service members, veterans, and their families with fairness and respect and to ensuring they do not face disadvantage when accessing services. Norwich City Council has signed the pledge, implementing specific measures such as housing priority, employment support, and healthcare accreditation to benefit the armed forces community

19. Ex-Offenders

19.1. Since 2021, Norwich has had an ex-offender adviser funded by the Accommodation for Ex Offenders project (AFEO). This adviser helps prevent homelessness by finding private rented housing for ex-offenders.

19.2. The adviser also acts as the primary point of contact for referrals and has cultivated strong working relationships with key institutions, including HMP Norwich and Probation services. These relationships are essential for identifying individuals at risk of homelessness early and facilitating smoother transitions from custody to community life. Despite these successes, finding housing is becoming increasingly challenging.

19.3. In years 2024-2025, the council received 236 referrals for ex-offenders who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days. The housing teams accepted 150 prevention and relief duties. However, the remaining ex-offenders either failed to present themselves for support upon release from custody or when they became homeless, illustrating the challenges in reaching these vulnerable individuals. This has led to an increase in the number of ex-

offenders who are at risk of rough sleeping. The third most common reason for loss of last settled housing in 2023-2024 is leaving an institution with no housing available.

19.4. Looking ahead, we are actively exploring alternative funding streams and partnership opportunities to sustain vital services and minimise any disruption for those who depend on them. Our ongoing priority is to provide consistent, high-quality support to individuals with an offending history who are at risk of, or currently experiencing, homelessness.

20. Domestic Abuse

20.1. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced significant changes to Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, including a new statutory definition of domestic abuse and enhanced support for those affected. One key change was the extension of the priority need category to include all eligible individuals who are homeless because of domestic abuse.

20.2. Many people experiencing domestic abuse are forced to flee their homes, often relocating away from their local council area due to immediate safety concerns. Recognising this critical need, we introduced a specialist Domestic Abuse Advisor within our Housing Options Team in 2019. This role provides tailored, trauma-informed support to those fleeing domestic abuse, helping them navigate housing pathways safely and effectively.

20.3. Domestic abuse has consistently remained one of the top three reasons for households being owed a prevention duty since 2021. The proportion of cases linked to the loss of home due to domestic abuse has risen from 4.7% in 2021-2022, to 5.5% in 2022-2023, and increased sharply to 17.2% in 2023-2024 with a slight reduction in 2024-2025 at 13.2%. This

significant rise in the most recent year highlights a growing urgency to enhance our preventative response and ensure earlier identification and intervention.

20.4. Due to the nature of domestic abuse, many individuals are required to leave their homes immediately. As a result, they typically present under the relief duty rather than the prevention duty, limiting opportunities to prevent homelessness before it occurs. Domestic abuse remains a leading cause of homelessness under the relief duty, with consistently high proportions: 14.6% in 2021–2022, rising to 18.8% in 2022–2023, then decreasing slightly to 15.2% in 2023–2024. This has increased again in 2024–2025 to 19.1%.

20.5. The council is currently working towards DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation with the ambition to achieve accreditation in 2026-2027. DAHA 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.

20.6. 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.

21. Homes for Ukraine, Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

22. Homes for Ukraine

22.1. The Norwich Homes for Ukraine scheme works in close partnership with Norfolk County Council, the People from Abroad Team (PFAT), and Children's Services to ensure effective communication and provide necessary support and

guidance. Strong collaboration has been essential to the scheme's success, helping to ensure that governance, guidelines, and safeguarding responsibilities are thoroughly addressed.

22.2. Housing continues to be a significant challenge. A strong partnership and collaboration with the Housing Options team has been crucial in supporting homelessness prevention and ensuring clear, ongoing communication particularly when guests face the possibility of moving into temporary accommodation.

23. Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

23.1. Norwich has experienced a rise in the number of people seeking asylum and refugee support in recent years. In response to international crises, the council has acted swiftly to meet emerging needs.

23.2. It collaborates closely with key partners including VCSE organisations, Norfolk County Council, Serco, and the Strategic Migration Board to support these communities. The Council has hosted engagement events with individuals with lived experience and officers from across the council including our housing teams to better understand and improve the support and services offered.

23.3. A refugee pathway has now been established, featuring dedicated officers within the housing prevention and relief teams, as well as specialist support officers who deliver person-centred, trauma-informed assistance to members of the refugee community. The council has strengthened its 'off the street' housing offer for these individuals by block-booking beds within one of the city's hostels.

23.4. We remain committed to continually enhancing this provision and are actively pursuing opportunities to further improve the housing available.

24. People With No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

24.1. People with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) are not eligible for mainstream welfare support, including housing benefit/universal credit, which means local councils have limited scope to provide assistance. In Norfolk, we liaise with the People from Abroad Team (PFAT) at Norfolk County Council regarding such cases, and we also work closely with relevant partner organisations when we encounter individuals who are sleeping rough and destitute.

25. Care Leavers and UASC

25.1. Care leavers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) are recognised as groups who may be at increased risk of homelessness due to their age, life experience, and the challenges of transitioning to independent living. Many have experienced instability, loss, or trauma, and may have limited support networks to guide them through the practical and emotional demands of managing a home. Preventing homelessness for these young people requires a proactive and coordinated approach.

25.2. We will continue to work closely with children's services, social workers, and personal advisers to ensure that planning for housing and support begins at the earliest possible stage. This includes joint protocol, assessments and transition plans that take into account the young person's aspirations, support needs, and the availability of suitable housing options.

25.3. For unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, we recognise the additional complexities arising from immigration status, language barriers, and the impact of previous experiences. Recent recruitment to our specialist support team means we

can now offer dedicated assistance to refugees including UASC customers in housing of any tenure, helping them navigate housing challenges and settle successfully.

25.4. Alongside this, the housing team's Tenancy Relations Advisor and Tenancy Coach can provide tailored, lower-intensity support to help individuals manage their tenancy, understand their rights and responsibilities, and address any early issues before they escalate. These are new roles to our housing service, and we will continue to monitor their impact to demonstrate effectiveness and influence further investment.

25.5. By intervening early, tailoring services to individual needs, and ensuring smooth transitions into safe and stable housing, we aim to give care leavers and UASC the best possible start to independent adulthood, reducing the risk of homelessness and supporting them to thrive.

26. LGBTIQ+

26.1. People who identify as LGBTIQ+ are at a higher risk of experiencing homelessness or insecure housing compared to those who do not, particularly among young people. They often face discrimination and abuse, which can increase the likelihood of developing issues related to substance misuse and mental health issues.

26.2. Additionally, people from the LGBTIQ+ community may have specific needs that are not always well understood. This lack of understanding can delay access to support and cause their situation to worsen before help is sought. 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.

26.3. 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.

27. Priority 4 - Develop and sustain partnerships to support our residents

27.1. Preventing homelessness requires a proactive, holistic approach, alongside agile joint working both within the Council and in collaboration with external partners, including the voluntary sector to deliver the best possible outcomes.

27.2. We work with a wide range of key partners to achieve our priorities, recognising that many of the challenges we face cannot be addressed in isolation. Through this strategy, we are committed to strengthening existing partnerships that support housing and services for vulnerable groups, both within Norwich and across Norfolk. Extending our collaborative efforts will become even more important in the context of local government reorganisation and devolution.

27.3. We will continue to work closely with Norfolk County Council and other district councils to overcome challenges and share resources where appropriate to meet mutual aims

27.4. We will continue to strengthen multi-agency working to ensure individuals at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness receive coordinated and effective support. By facilitating shared learning and best practice across partners.

27.5. Partnership working will also focus on preventing people from being discharged from institutions with no fixed address, through the implementation and monitoring of clear and consistent protocols and joint working.

27.6. We are committed to continuing engagement with social services and mental health services, recognising the vital role these partnerships play in securing suitable housing pathways for applicants with complex needs.

28. Forming the Strategy

29. Introduction

29.1. The council is strongly committed to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

29.2. Having access to safe and suitable housing, and preventing both homelessness and rough sleeping, is vital for the wellbeing of individuals and the strength of communities. In recent years, challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis have placed significant strain on households. Many people who previously managed without difficulty are now facing housing insecurity.

29.3. These pressures are compounded by a shortage of temporary accommodation, a lack of specialist housing for people with complex needs, and high demand in a competitive private rental market. This strategy provides a framework to ensure that anyone affected can access meaningful and effective support.

29.4. In 2018 Government introduced the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), increasing the responsibilities of councils to prevent and relieve homelessness at an earlier stage. The Act also placed greater emphasis on supporting single-person households. Since its introduction, there has been a noticeable rise in support being sought by these households, particularly single men.

29.5. Although more people are approaching the Housing Options team for assistance, fewer are being owed a prevention or relief duty. This suggests that many are receiving helpful advice early in the process, before a statutory duty is triggered. Despite this, prevention and relief duties have become more difficult to deliver due to the challenging housing market and the lack of affordable housing for those on low incomes. Over the past five years, the council's Housing Options team has expanded and adapted, not only to meet the requirements of the Act but also to respond to the needs of the local community.

29.6. The Homelessness Reduction Act introduced a statutory duty on councils to review homelessness within their authority area and formulate a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. An update to the Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2020–2025 and Norwich Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 is necessary to ensure the council, and its partners are doing all they can to prevent and respond to homelessness across the district. The review of these two strategies has resulted in this new combined Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

29.7. In recent years, the pressure on councils to provide housing for homeless families has increased significantly. Homelessness can affect anyone, and its primary cause is a lack of access to stable, affordable, and suitable housing.

29.8. A variety of factors can increase the risk of homelessness or make it more difficult for someone to secure a new home. These include low or unstable income, unemployment, poor physical or mental health, substance or alcohol misuse, relationship breakdown, or a combination of these challenges.

30. Key Legislation and guidance

30.1. The legal framework for homelessness is primarily set out in Part 7 of **The Housing Act 1996**, which establishes duties on local councils to prevent homelessness and support households who are homeless or at risk.

30.2. **The Homelessness Act 2002** built upon this by promoting a more strategic approach to tackling homelessness and expanding the definition of “priority need” to include additional vulnerable groups. The Homeless (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 further broadened eligibility for housing assistance.

30.3. **‘A National Plan to End Homelessness’ 2025** this is the government’s comprehensive strategy to prevent homelessness wherever possible, improve support for people who do become homeless, and ultimately eliminate rough sleeping and unsuitable temporary accommodation. It sets out national targets, a cross-government approach, and actions over the short, medium and long term to transform how homelessness is prevented and responded to across England

30.4. **The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** introduced significant reforms, placing new responsibilities on local councils to intervene earlier. It extended the prevention duty to start up to 56 days before a household is likely to become homeless and introduced a 56-day relief duty once homelessness occurs, regardless of priority need status.

- 30.5. **The Homelessness Code of Guidance** provides detailed direction on how local councils should implement their duties under the 2017 Act.
- 30.6. **The Domestic Abuse Act 2021** amended the Housing Act 1996 to introduce a legal definition of domestic abuse and ensure that all eligible victims who are homeless as a result are treated as having a priority need for accommodation.
- 30.7. **The Renters' Rights Act** seeks to improve security and standards in the private rented sector. Key provisions include abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions, creating a Private Landlord Ombudsman, enhancing local council enforcement powers, and applying the Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law to privately rented homes.
- 30.8. **Homelessness Strategy for England** A cross-government Inter-Ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping has been established and it is expected the new strategy will be published in 2025.
- 30.9. **Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023**. The Act introduces new measures to improve oversight and quality in supported housing. Key provisions include placing a duty on local councils to develop Supported Accommodation Strategies. The government is also consulting on proposals to introduce mandatory licensing for supported housing providers and to establish a clearer definition of 'care', 'support', and 'supervision' to guide the setting of appropriate rents and charges.

31. About Norwich

31.1. Norwich is the only city in the county of Norfolk, it stands out both demographically and culturally within the region. As of the 2021 Census, its population reached approximately 144,000, marking an 8.7% increase from 132,500 in 2011.

31.2. The Norwich City Council area is approximately 40.55 km² with a population density of around 3,614 persons per km². This compares to an England population density of 407 persons per km² (falls to 353 if London is excluded from the national figure).



Population by broad age group for Norwich (2021)

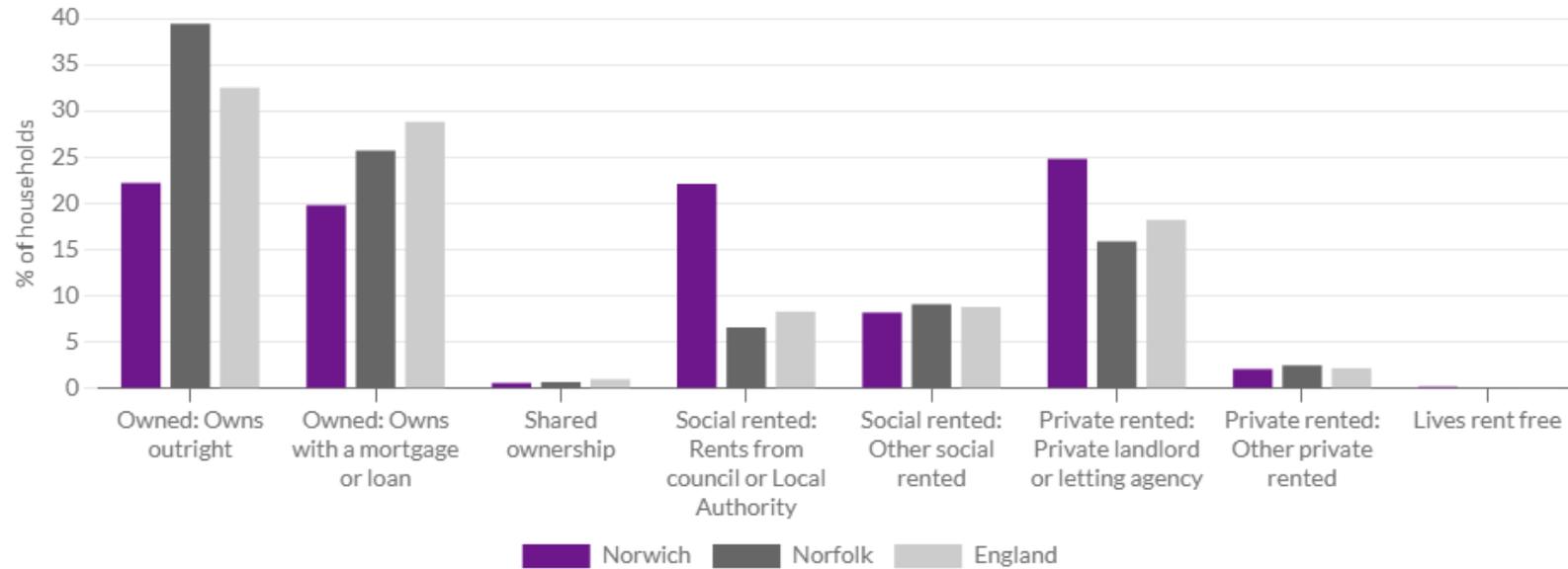


31.3. Norwich exhibits a youthful demographic profile, largely due to its status as a university city. The largest age group is 20 to 24 year-olds, attributed to the presence of the University of East Anglia and Norwich University of the Arts. Projections suggest that by 2028, people under 25 will constitute 35.9% of Norwich's population, the highest proportion in Norfolk, while those aged 65 and over will make up 16.2%, the lowest in the county.

31.4. There are 69,160 properties in Norwich. The majority of these homes are private rented. Norwich's housing characteristics are distinctive, reflecting both the city's demographic composition and the broader challenges it faces.

31.5. The city's housing stock is diverse, with a mix of historic properties, newer developments, and purpose-built student accommodation. A significant factor influencing the housing market is the substantial student population, which has led to a large number of purpose-built student accommodation, particularly in areas close to the University of East Anglia (UEA) and Norwich University of the Arts. One result of having a thriving student population is the high prevalence of single-person households in the city. Alongside this, factors such as the presence of high levels of supported accommodation and a concentration of institutional settings, including prisons and asylum dispersal accommodation, place additional pressure on single-person housing within Norwich.

Ownership and tenancy by type (2021)



32.

32.1. As at October 2025, Norwich City Council owns a total of 14,211 properties, which includes 13,291 general needs homes and 920 sheltered homes. The majority of the council’s housing stock was built between 1965 and 1982, and many of these properties are now in need of investment for modernisation and repairs.

32.2. The 2021 Greater Norwich Housing Needs Assessment highlights the significant demand for housing in the city. To meet this demand, the assessment suggests that Norwich needs to build 2,033 homes for newly forming households, with 1,464 needed for general housing and 569 for affordable or specialised housing, which accounts for 28% of the overall need.

	All Households	Households able to afford housing costs	Households unable to afford housing costs	% unable to afford housing costs
All new households	3,842	3,316	526	14%
Norwich:				
Newly forming households	2,033	1,464	569	28%
Households migrating into area	4,987	3,456	1,531	31%
Total new households	7,020	4,920	2,100	30%

32.3. Norwich's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, including its youthful and diverse population, urban density, and pronounced inequalities, set it apart from other Norfolk districts. These factors are crucial considerations for developing effective homelessness strategies tailored to the city's specific needs.

33. Key Statistics and Facts about Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Norwich

33.1. Number of people sleeping rough in Norwich (rough sleeping snapshot numbers)

- 2020: 21
- 2021: 10
- 2022: 7
- 2023: 5
- 2024: 12

34. Homelessness Approaches

34.1. Number of homeless approaches

- 2022-2023: 1,750
- 2023-2024: 2,366
- 2024-2025: 2,052

34.2. Prevention and relief duties

- 2022-2023: 865
- 2023-2024: 1,010
- 2024-2025: 1,171

34.3. **Top three reasons for loss of settled accommodation 2024-2025**

Prevention

1. End of private rented tenancy
2. Domestic abuse
3. Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate

Relief

1. Family no longer willing or able to accommodate
2. Domestic abuse
3. Eviction from supported housing

34.4. The end of private rented tenancies remains the leading cause of homelessness, accounting for 33% of prevention cases.

Top three priority need reasons households owed a main duty in 2024-2025

1. Household includes dependent children
2. Domestic abuse
3. Mental health problems

35. Highest identified support needs of households:

1. Mental health problems
2. Domestic abuse
3. Physical health/disability
4. History of offending

36. Our Achievements

- 36.1. Over the last five years Norwich City Council and its partners have continued to make significant progress in preventing and reducing rough sleeping and homelessness. Through strong partnership working, targeted support, and the expansion of specialist roles, we have improved access to accommodation, maintained low numbers of people sleeping rough, and strengthened pathways for some of the city's most vulnerable residents.
- 36.2. The following highlights showcase the collective impact of our ongoing commitment to ending homelessness in Norwich:
- 36.3. Activated Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) beds during periods of severe weather, maximising the use of hostel beds and securing additional accommodation to keep people sleeping rough safe.
- 36.4. Norwich has seen a fall in rough sleeping numbers over time. In 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 the number of individuals sleeping rough on a single night in Norwich decreased from 21, to 10, to 7, and finally to 5. This was despite a national increase in rough sleeping figures across the rest of the UK. Though this count increased in 2024 in line with national trends, it remained low with only 12 individuals seen to be sleeping rough on one night.
- 36.5. Continued to develop strong relationships with partner agencies such as Norfolk County, NHS teams, Probation and Prison Service, Serco and develop effective pathways for vulnerable groups.
- 36.6. Expanded specialist officers in the Housing Options team and Specialist Support Team to include refugee specialist support officer, housing officer (refugees), housing officer (ex-offenders).

- 36.7. Mediation service to support housing officers to prevent young people being evicted from family households launched in 2025.
- 36.8. Pathways Norwich continues to provide specialist, collaborative support to some of the most vulnerable individuals in the city. In 2024, the MHCLG offered overwhelmingly positive feedback following their analysis of the service.
- 36.9. Norwich City Council has coordinated the accommodation for ex-offenders scheme for Norfolk (AFEO) this enabled the creation of a specialist prevention housing officer and admin role to support individuals being released from prison and improving collaboration with the prison and probation service.
- 36.10. 91 people have been successfully housed via the AFEO scheme in Norwich since 2023.
- 36.11. 91 new tenancies with LET NCC in 2024-2025.
- 36.12. 73 affordable homes completed in 2024-2025.
- 36.13. Working in partnership with Broadland Housing Association, we developed seven affordable rental homes under the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP).
- 36.14. In 2025, the Rough Sleeping Team appointed a Housing Officer (Target Priority Group) to deliver coordinated support aimed at helping our most complex residents access and sustain accommodation.

37. Our Challenges

The council faces numerous challenges that impact our housing advice and homelessness services.

38. Time limited government funding

38.1. The housing service receives government funding primarily through the Homelessness Prevention Fund and the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (previously known as the Rough Sleeping Initiative). These grants are often time-limited, which can create challenges in long-term service planning and sustainability. The Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant is the primary funding for Pathways Norwich which also commissions the Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub.

39. Demand for single person accommodation and the contributing factors

39.1. The council continues to face significant challenges in meeting the growing demand for single person accommodation. Single adults particularly those with complex needs, including ex-offenders, individuals with a history of rough sleeping, and those experiencing mental ill health represent a substantial proportion of those approaching the council for housing support. However, the supply of suitable, affordable accommodation remains limited. Contributing factors include a decline in social housing availability, reduced access to the private rented sector, and recent cuts to housing-related support services. These pressures are further exacerbated by national policy changes, such as early prison releases and asylum dispersal, which increase demand for single-person housing. These combined challenges highlight the urgent need for investment in sustainable, long-term housing solutions tailored to this demographic.

40. Supported housing funding reduction

40.1. Cuts to Housing Related Support (HRS) funding in Norfolk have reduced the availability of supported accommodation for single-person households. In Norwich, this has affected 237 bed spaces, with several key services facing decommissioning or funding reductions of up to 30%. These changes have increased pressure on housing advice and homelessness services, as individuals with complex needs are left with fewer options and are more likely to present in crisis. While the council continues to work with partners to mitigate the impact, the scale of these cuts highlights the urgent need for sustainable funding and investment in specialist housing pathways.

41. Affordable housing supply

41.1. Norwich like many districts face challenges when increasing the supply of affordable housing. Key constraints include limited availability of suitable land for development and the impact of environmental regulations such as nutrient neutrality and biodiversity net gain requirements. These challenges are compounded by planning infrastructure limitations and broader market pressures, including rising construction costs and reduced developer confidence. Despite proactive efforts, including strategic partnerships and land transfers, the delivery of affordable homes remains below target, underscoring the need for continued investment and policy reform to unlock supply.

42. Financial pressures on public services

42.1. Public services including councils, are operating under increasing financial strain due to sustained pressure on public sector budgets. At the same time, demand for housing and homelessness services continues to rise sharply, driven by economic instability, welfare reform, and a growing number of individuals presenting with complex needs.

43. The Voice of the Service User and Wider Public Consultation

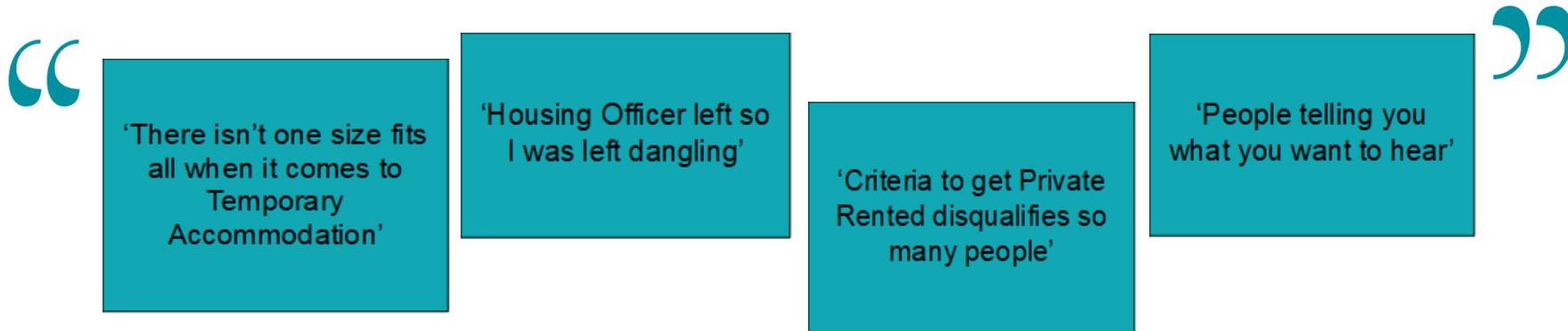
Responses

43.1. 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.

43.2. 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.

43.3. 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.

43.4. Some of the perspectives from this session are quoted below:



43.5. Other feedback from the session included:

- 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).
- People moving from the streets into tenancies risk isolation and need better information about ongoing support.

43.6. Ultimately, after reviewing each priority and the associated actions, the group agreed the priorities within this strategy were the appropriate priorities to adopt.

43.7. The full public consultation report can be found in Appendix A of this document

44. Conclusion

44.1. This strategy reaffirms our collective commitment to preventing and reducing homelessness and rough sleeping in Norwich. We recognise that no single organisation can solve these challenges alone. Success depends on deep partnership working across housing, health, social care, criminal justice, voluntary organisations and lived-experience groups, and on active collaboration with neighbouring district councils, particularly within the framework of Local Government Reorganisation.

44.2. Above all, our focus remains on serving our community by directing support and resources to the people who need them most, breaking cycles of homelessness and building the foundations for long term stability and inclusion.

45. Delivering and Monitoring Our Strategy

45.1. We will deliver our priorities by focusing on the tangible aims set out in the action plan attached to this strategy. The action plan explains how we will achieve each aim and will be updated regularly so it stays relevant and amended as appropriate in light of local government reorganisation.

45.2. Our progress will be checked through regular internal meetings, by councillors, Housing Leadership Team (HLT) and the wider senior leadership teams. We will also work closely with our partners to keep the strategy under review and ensure we implement improvements and adjustments where required.

45.3. As stated within governments 'National Plan to End Homelessness' 2025 councils will be required as a condition of funding to publish and regularly update their homelessness strategy action plans.

Glossary of Terms

Affordable Housing - Homes that are cheaper than the regular market rate, so people on low or moderate incomes can afford them. This includes:

- **Social Rented Housing:** Housing owned by local councils or housing associations and let at low rents, often with priority given to people in housing need.
- **Affordable Rented Housing:** Housing let by local councils or housing associations at rents up to a certain limit (usually no more than 80% of the local market rent).

Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AFE0) – this is a government-funded scheme that helps people leaving prison access private rented housing with support to prevent homelessness and reduce reoffending.

Asylum Dispersal - A government scheme where people seeking asylum are moved from one area to another in the UK, so that support and accommodation can be provided while their claim is being processed.

Care Leavers - a person aged 25 or under, who has been looked after by a Local council for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14; and who was looked after by the Local council at school leaving age or after that date

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) - Local housing authorities have the ability to authorise DHP to those who may require some financial assistance in order to meet their housing costs

Duty to Refer – A formal duty placed on public bodies under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to refer individuals or are homeless or threatened with homelessness into a local council of the individuals choosing. Public bodies are; prisons (public and contracted out); youth offender institutions and youth offending teams; secure training centres (public and contracted out) and colleges; probation services (community rehabilitation companies and national probation service); jobcentre plus; accident and emergency; services provided in a hospital; urgent treatment centres; and hospitals in their capacity of providing inpatient treatment; social service authorities.

Homelessness Approaches – people contacting the local council to ask for homelessness assistance

Let NCC - Norwich City Council's private sector leasing scheme

LGBTIQ+ - stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, and Asexual. The '+' represents minority gender identities and sexualities not explicitly included in the term LGBTIQ.

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) - people who are subject to immigration control and have no entitlement to welfare benefits, to home office asylum support for asylum seekers, or to public housing

Pathways Norwich - Rough Sleeping Service in the Norwich City district. Consists of 7 partner agencies, provision of accommodation and support.

Prevention Duty

This is the council's duty to help someone who is at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days. The council works with the person to prevent homelessness for example, by negotiating with their landlord, helping with rent arrears, or finding alternative accommodation before they lose their current home.

Relief Duty

This is the council's duty to help someone who is already homeless. The council must take reasonable steps to help them secure suitable accommodation for at least 6 months. This could involve supporting applications to the private rented sector or referring them to supported housing.

Reconnection - Reconnection is when a council or homelessness service helps someone who is homeless return to an area where they have a local connection - for example where they previously lived, have family support, or access to services. The aim is to link the person back into an area where they are more likely to have housing options, community ties, or ongoing support, rather than remaining in a place with no such connections

Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP) – this is a government-funded scheme that provides long-term homes and support services for people who have been sleeping rough or are at risk of returning to the streets.

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) - People sleeping rough in Norwich can access emergency accommodation and support during periods of exceptionally cold weather through the SWEP.

Temporary accommodation (TA) – Government legislation states that the local council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation if it has reason to believe someone may be: Homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need. This duty applies

while the council makes further inquiries into the person's circumstances. Once the inquiries are complete, the council will decide what ongoing duty it owes under the homelessness legislation.



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