



# **GREATER NORWICH**

**Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025:**

**Progress Review**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document reviews the progress by Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council in meeting the priorities set out in the Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025. The review of these outcomes will also inform in creating the next iteration of these strategies, which will combine both homelessness and rough sleeping priorities – this has been provisionally called the Broadland and South Norfolk Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025-2030.
- 1.2. Unforeseen events and priorities will always arise during the lifetime of a strategy. Shortly after the creation of this strategy, the primary focus was on the pandemic and recovery from the predicted economic downturn. During this time, we have witnessed the tail-end of Covid, the resultant cost of living crisis, an increase in domestic abuse related homelessness presentations, the further erosion of the private rented sector, and the warm welcome provided to Ukrainian guests arriving in the area.
- 1.3. In summarising the outcomes of the two Councils' Homelessness Strategy, we have documented our actions into a themed approach. This is to ensure that the outcomes of all the work that has occurred over the past 5 years can be accurately summarised, as many themes fit over several of the original priorities outlined in our strategy. These themes are crucial because they all individually ensure that focus was given to each priority area. Our themed approach covers the following areas:
  1. Reaching more vulnerable residents
  2. Partnership working
  3. Better allocating resources
  4. Supporting independence
  5. Prioritising early intervention
  6. Responding to growing demand
  7. The use of data
- 1.4. By focusing on early intervention and using data to inform decisions, the strategy aimed to prevent homelessness before it occurs and respond efficiently to growing demands. We achieved this by giving support to vulnerable residents, including those in rural areas and those fleeing domestic abuse, to ensure they receive the support they need through effective resource allocation and strong partnerships.
- 1.5. Additionally, supporting independence and delivering measurable results help maintain long-term stability for individuals and demonstrate the effectiveness of the initiatives. These themes have been chosen to outline our councils work and showcase our holistic and effective approach to tackling homelessness, ensuring that support is accessible, targeted, and sustainable.

## 2. Our key successes

2.1. Across our four key priorities, we have found these successes:



### i. Better accommodation opportunities:

- Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation: Established 5 dwellings across Broadland and South Norfolk for those fleeing domestic abuse.
- Rural Temporary Accommodation: Expanded our Temporary Accommodation offer to meet the needs of the residents across the whole of the districts including those living in more rural areas.



### ii. Better outreach for our residents:

- Social Prescribing Services: Expanded social prescribing services to every GP surgery across Broadland and South Norfolk.
- Help Hub Community Engagement Van (CeVAN): Operational and supporting over 100 residents across both districts.



### iii. Better focus on domestic abuse:

- Norfolk Domestic Abuse Partnership Board: Active participation and collaboration with relevant organisations to support domestic abuse victims.
- Sanctuary Scheme: Launched to provide target hardening measures to properties of domestic abuse survivors, with over 300 referrals received.



### iv. More tailored support:

- Early Prevention Officer Role: Supported in preventing 57 residents from needing statutory homeless intervention within six months.
- Housing Support for Care Leavers: Improved support for care leavers, allowing them to apply for the housing register when 17 years old.
- Criminal Justice Housing Support Officer: Created a role to support individuals being released from prison, improving collaboration with the prison service.
- Support for Ukrainian Guests and Refugees: Provided a tailored offer for Ukrainian guests and refugees to support with housing and community integration.



### v. Prioritised growth and affordability:

- Affordable Housing Delivery: Enabled the delivery of more than 3,000 affordable homes across both districts since 2018.
- Economic Support Programs: Operated the Business Builder program and Carrowbreck Training Centre to support employability and business growth.

### 3. Priority 1

#### **Develop and Deliver Flexible Housing and Support Solutions to Enable People to Safely Move on from Domestic Abuse**

##### **Reaching more vulnerable residents**

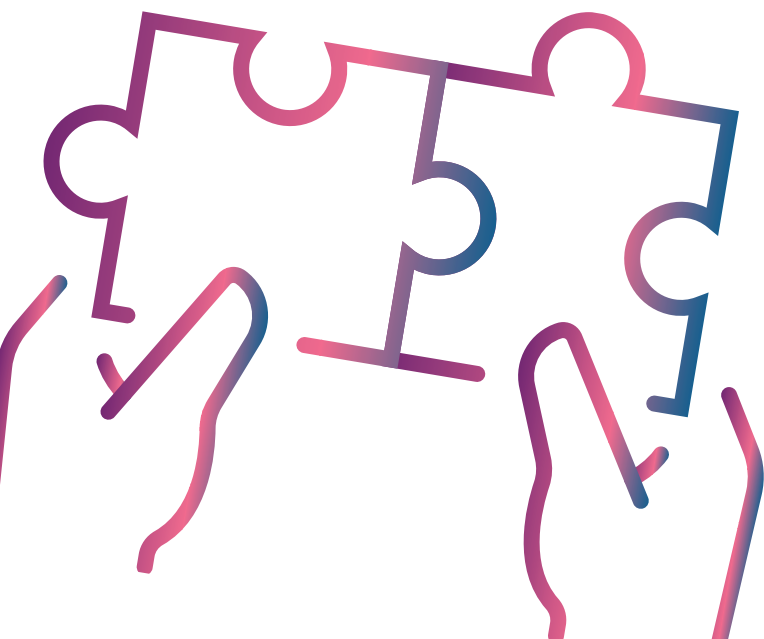
- 3.1. We have worked to commission domestic abuse safe accommodation and have established 5 dwellings over the last 5 years across South Norfolk and Broadland to support those fleeing domestic abuse. Broadland and South Norfolk both have an agreement with Orwell Housing domestic abuse specialists for 5 DA properties across both areas, which can provide safe accommodation for those who have fled domestic abuse.
- 3.2. To support our objective of being able to reach residents in rural parts of our districts, we have introduced Temporary Accommodation (TA) stock into a wider geographical area across the districts. This stock ensures that we can support individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, those fleeing domestic abuse, and people with specific health or mobility needs. In creating the focus of our Homelessness prevention agenda, it was important to provide access to those who are identified as harder to reach, specifically looking at how we could create solutions to enable people to safely move on from domestic abuse. The accommodation available to those fleeing domestic abuse now allows better options over the two districts and grants an appropriate distance in accommodation based on the circumstances of each case.
- 3.3. Our temporary accommodation is spread across the two districts each offering different features through their locations. One is based close to Norwich, allowing access to the city and the benefits that come from this proximity in amenities and transport access. The other is based in a market town, allowing the benefits of being closer to more rural areas in South Norfolk, while still being geographically easy to access transport and amenities.
- 3.4. We have also been able to provide focussed support for those who are fleeing from or seeking advice on domestic abuse being treated equally, regardless of age, gender, and other circumstances. By working with Norfolk Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (NIDAS) since 2022, as well as the Pandora Project, we can tailor effective support for men and LGBTQI+ to ensure they are given the appropriate and tailored assistance they need. We can offer accommodation that will be suitable for a wide range of needs, from shared or self-contained refuge, to ensure that all female, male, trans, non-binary, or any individual with protected characteristics can all be accommodated. We are also providing support for customers with court advocacy or referrals to Shelter court services where needed.
- 3.5. The Councils have also been able to expand our social prescribing services wider, supporting residents who can access GP surgeries. This has been achieved through continued recruitment of Social Prescribers to allow one to be in every surgery across Broadland and South Norfolk, as well as others in the North Norfolk and Norwich areas, ensuring to further our support to help people across Norfolk. We have started to expand our advertisements in places such as foodbanks, community groups, pharmacies, and libraries, where we

know residents who need support can access easily, giving them opportunities to reach out in a way that suits them to ask for the help or advice that they need.

- 3.6. Furthermore, our Help Hub Community Engagement van (CeVAN) is now operational and travels through both districts, allowing residents to access support and information. This has allowed us to support over 100 residents across Broadland and South Norfolk, visiting many of our residents from Ditchingham to Great Witchingham, ensuring we visit smaller towns and villages, giving all residents opportunities to visit and chat with our specialised officers who can assist. This further outreach tackles a variety of topics such as bereavement support, housing issues, money, and domestic issues.

## Partnership Working

- 3.7. To ensure that the Norfolk-wide response to homelessness in connection to fleeing domestic abuse is as consistent as possible, we have undertaken several steps to work better with other partner organisations.
- 3.8. Broadland and South Norfolk Councils are part of the Norfolk Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (NDAPB) alongside several Housing Associations, Norfolk Constabulary, Norfolk County Council, BUILD Charity and Equal Lives. NDAPB have established a needs assessment for those accessing the service and investigates our current bedspace capacity compared to demand to assess how we can adapt to anticipated future needs. We are reacting accordingly to our demand level, but more improvement is needed in this area to ensure those needing aid are receiving timely support. We also work alongside NIDAS, who are commissioned by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk (OPCCN). NIDAS were launched in early 2022, offering free and confidential support to recover from abuse, with Council officers participating in the commissioning process with the OPCCN. NIDAS is a trauma-informed, person-centred service that helps people to move from domestic abuse with increased confidence and well-being.
- 3.9. Joint working with other statutory sector or voluntary agencies has also enabled us to increase the support we are able to offer to those fleeing domestic abuse. We have brought in NIDAS to work together in closer collaboration, and they are now embedded within our office to work alongside staff and assist Housing Support Officers with residents presenting with domestic abuse and other related casework. They provide a safety net with domestic abuse linked cases and have helped us to develop and improve our response in how we deal with domestic abuse cases.
- 3.10. Together with NIDAS, we have created a referral form that allows people accessing the service to only outline their situation and needs once. We were previously receiving many referrals from NIDAS which contained insufficient information, leading to us contacting individuals to ask for confirmation or additional details they had previously shared, and that could potentially be harmful to their mental wellbeing to discuss. This led to risks of furthering the trauma experienced by customers, leading one of our officers to create a bespoke form for customers to fill in, removing this unnecessary replication. The single collaborative referral form was initially introduced with NIDAS, but has since been further rolled out to Pandora, Leeway and Orwell.





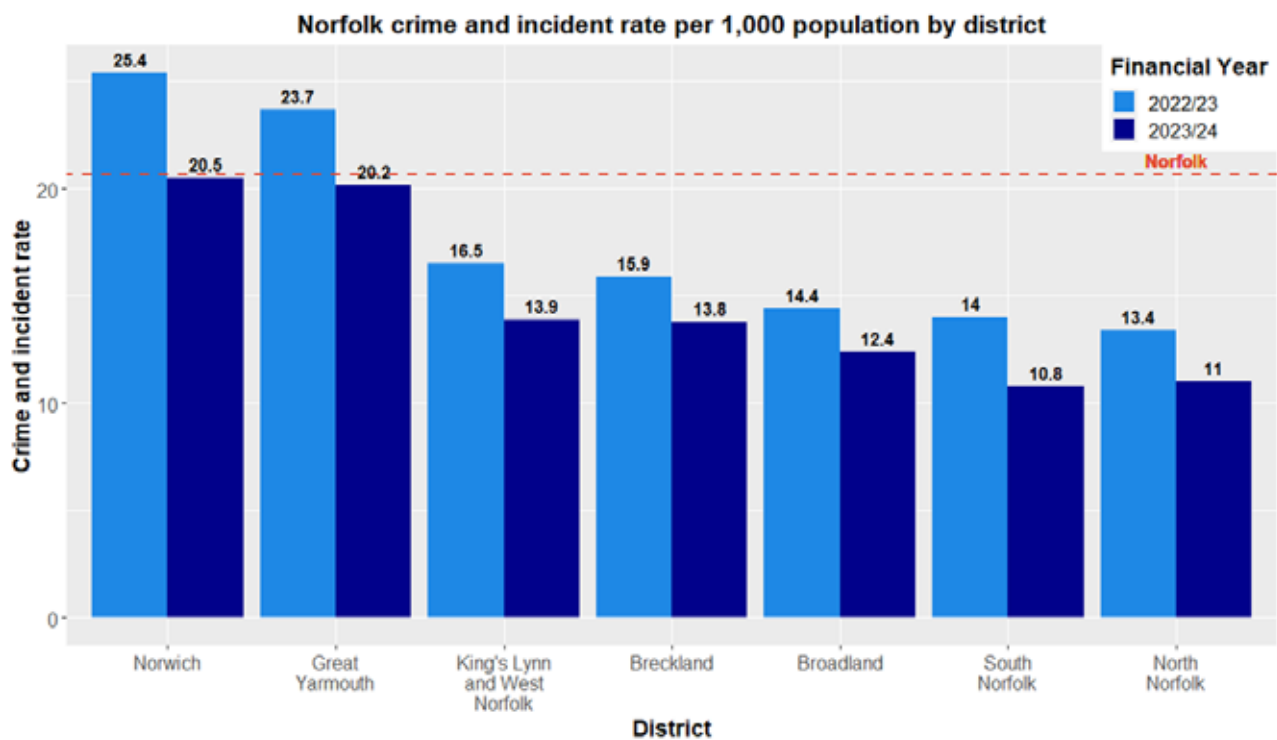
- 3.11. During this period, we have enabled our staff to receive bespoke training for front-facing Housing Support Officers and Help Hub staff. This training has allowed us to increase our number of staff able to be domestic abuse champions, therefore widening the number of staff able to support and complete work such as DASH assessments, a risk assessment form used across England to understand the risk level for the victim, and any other specialised support.
- 3.12. Additionally, we conduct daily triage meetings with different services including representatives from our Help Hub, Norfolk Constabulary, NIDAS, Social Prescribers, Community Connectors and Registered Providers. These meetings give space to share key information between these stakeholders to make more tailored and appropriate decisions. Furthermore, by chairing the Norfolk Housing Alliance with the social housing sector and Heads of Housing in other local authorities, we have been able to hold multi-agency partnership meetings to ensure we are working together effectively and best supporting our residents.

### **Better allocating resource**

- 3.13. We have utilised direct Domestic Abuse Act 2021 funding and funding through NDAPB to develop our domestic abuse response, which has led to both our Sanctuary Scheme and work with Orwell Housing. Since the Homelessness Strategy came into place, we have utilised this funding and created a specific Housing & Benefits Domestic Abuse specialist post. This new position has meant we have been able to provide better support for those fleeing domestic abuse, building a relationship of trust and sincerity. By having this post, we have been able to expand our support for those experiencing housing difficulties due to a variety of issues outside of those safely moving on from domestic abuse, as we have had the dedicated resource in place. Procedures have also been examined to ensure that case checking and reviewing has become more involved and thorough, with the support of working with specialist partners. However, over 85% of domestic abuse housing presentations the service now receives are from outside our districts adding further demand to pressures.
- 3.14. After the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was passed, we launched the Norfolk-based Sanctuary Scheme, working in partnership with Norfolk County Council. Each Council area in Norfolk takes a localised approach to delivering the scheme. Our internal Handyperson scheme allowed us to integrate these schemes together and recruit additional staff into the Handyperson role, enabling us to now have Level 3 Crime Prevention trained staff who can provide target hardening measures to the properties of victim-survivors of domestic abuse. Our approach has enabled us to provide a service that is cost effective and time efficient, which allows us to support a greater number of residents than alternative approaches seen in other Council areas that have out-sourced target hardening works to external contractors. By the end of October 2024, we had received over 300 referrals into the Sanctuary Scheme and were able to provide advice and target hardening to over 80% of those.

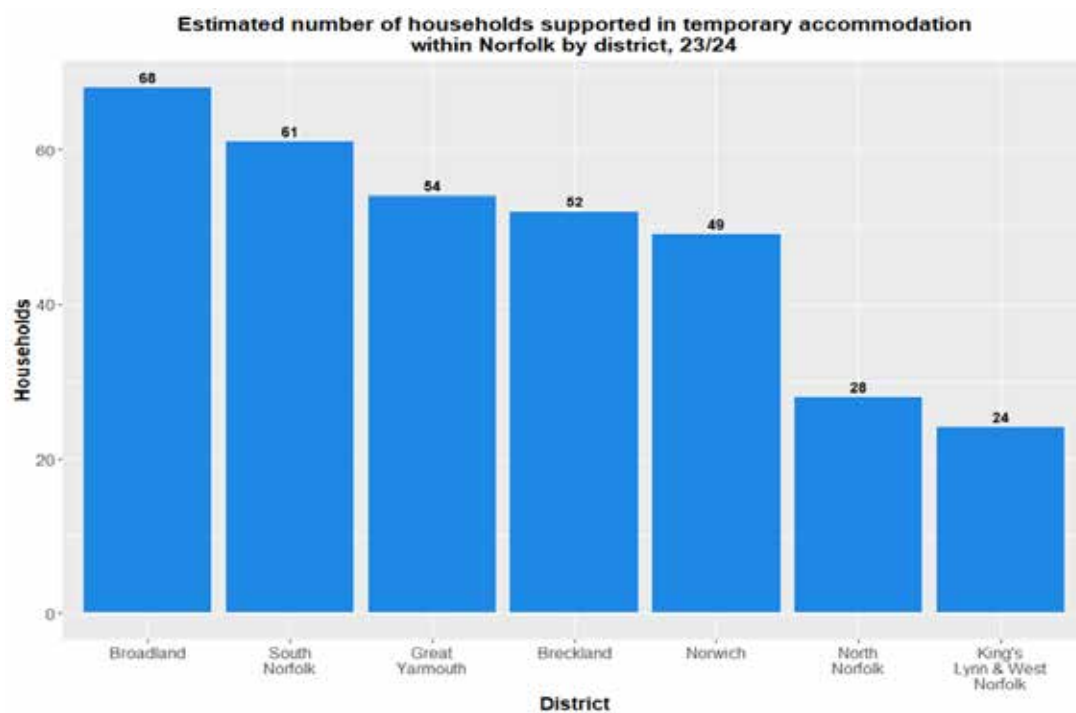
### **Supporting independence**

- 3.15. Our improved service for victim-survivors of domestic abuse by using the Sanctuary Scheme allows us to support people remaining living safely and independently in their homes wherever possible. This is incredibly significant in today's climate as, a report by The National Network to End Domestic Violence found that nationally, 63% of unmet requests for services from domestic violence programs were for housing. Whilst this is the national landscape, South Norfolk and Broadland have one of the lowest recorded numbers of Domestic Abuse incidents/crimes (along with North Norfolk), as seen in the graph below.



Source: Norfolk Constabulary & ONS

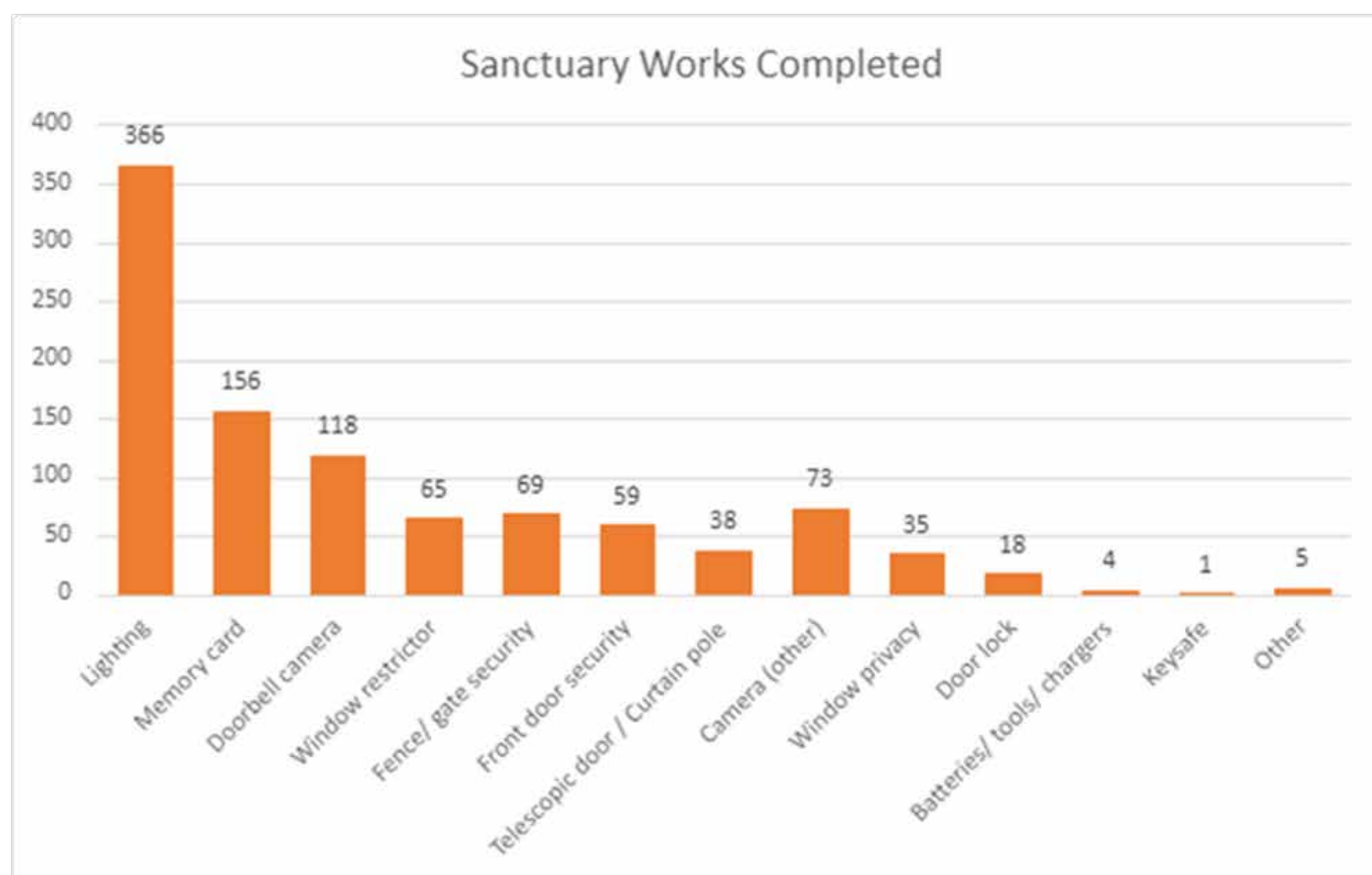
3.16. Despite this, South Norfolk and Broadland have by some distance the largest number of Domestic Abuse customers in temporary accommodation, as seen below.



Source: Norfolk districts



- 3.17. This indicates that South Norfolk and Broadland have a higher proportion of Domestic Abuse cases in our Temporary Accommodation than take place in our districts. This aligns with the high numbers of presentations from households from outside the districts as stated above.
- 3.18. It should be noted that crossing a district boundary does not automatically provide a safe location. Each case should be assessed on the household's individual circumstances and where possible, and safe to do so, the household should be supported to maintain links to their support networks and communities.
- 3.19. Consequently, we have focused our work with the Sanctuary Scheme to provide relief to our customers and this scheme has prevented individual victim-survivors needing to move away from friends, family, schools, and support networks. Being able to provide this free of charge to residents ensures accessibility for all, and is open to those in social housing, private rent, and owner occupier properties, though landlord permission will be required for works. Our fully trained Sanctuary officer can provide target hardening measures to properties, such as new door and window locks, window restrictors, smart camera doorbells, gate bolts, and other custom-made measures.



- 3.20. Additionally, individuals in our properties all have access to our Freedom programme, a behavioural change course for victim-survivors to help them make sense of and understand what has happened to them and to provides tools for healthy relationships.

## 4. Priority 2

### Preventing Homelessness

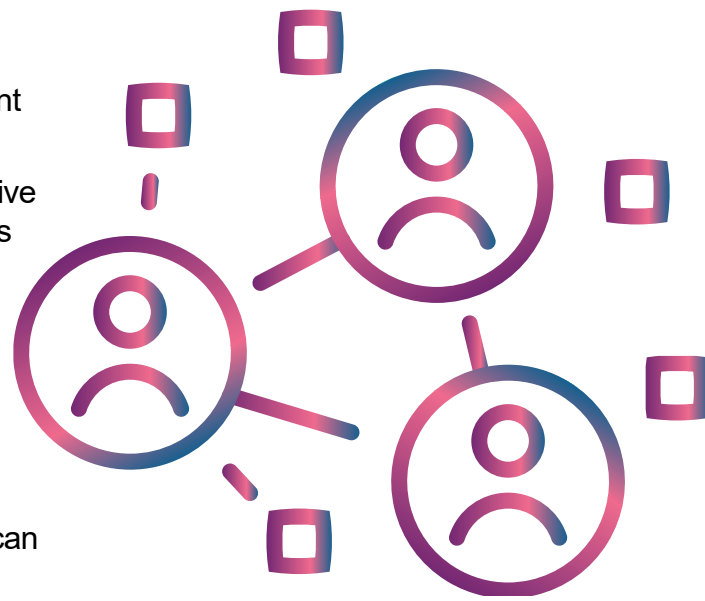
#### Prioritising Early Intervention

- 4.1. The introduction of an Early Prevention Officer role in 2023 drove an increase of 12% more households taken out of 'being at risk of homelessness', something they were able to achieve within the first three months of the role. This figure is projected to increase to 20% by the end of the 24/25 financial year. Subsequently, whilst we are looking at how to expand the support this role offers, as well as potentially develop additional job roles, the support this officer has offered has had an uptake of over 90% between both residents and social landlords. This proactive approach has meant many of our partners are having better initial conversations with residents and therefore reducing the financial and emotional burdens on individuals. For example, we can support residents with deposit costs, lessening the demand on the social housing team and temporary accommodation teams, as well as social landlords and residents. This means that around 10 residents a month are prevented from having to seek statutory support.
- 4.2. Having the Early Prevention Officer role has enabled us to have better relationships with Housing Associations and further partners, allowing for more open conversations around prevention and support for and from social landlords. Over a six-month period, this role directly helped to prevent 57 residents from needing statutory homeless intervention. This role has also allowed us to better work cohesively with supporting other job roles, such as undertaking work with our Benefit Maximisation Officer to identify cases where there are affordability or tenancy risk issues.
- 4.3. This has successfully led us to deliver prevention measures for those most vulnerable leaving care but also signals that there is further work to be done to deliver homelessness prevention in places of education, and with wider family networks.

#### Partnership working

- 4.4. The Early Prevention Officer role has been able to work closely with children's services teams across the county, improving our working relationships with childcare teams and allowing us to implement relationships and plans for individuals about to turn 18 who need further housing support. Historically, there have been a high number of cases needing immediate resolution linked to children in care the day they become 18. We have worked with different children's services agencies across Norfolk to ensure that these conversations can be held from when individuals are around 17 and a half, removing the previous time-sensitive placements that historically were common. Broadland and South Norfolk are the only district councils in Norfolk who allow children who are 17 and a half in care to apply for the housing register. This means placement can be found in a timely, non-rushed manner with the support needed for more of our vulnerable residents, especially children. Any care leavers that we house have been linked with our Financial Wellbeing team, who have been able to create a starter pack for these residents to support them to have the best possible start and assured future. It includes money management, information on good tenancy

agreements, and a further link with our employment team to work with finding a job and self-autonomy.



- 4.5. Our Early Prevention Officer is continuing a pro-active approach to ensuring we link up with other agencies and professionals via the No Homelessness in Norfolk Forum, as well as presenting good practice procedures at workshops around early intervention to other professionals. Outside of this specific body of work, this Officer has reached out to all other local authorities in Norfolk to understand what is being done regarding any early intervention or prevention work and how this can be linked together or replicated.
- 4.6. Working with our partners, we have identified shared training opportunities with the Norfolk Housing Options teams and other agencies. These opportunities are shared and filtered through the Norfolk Housing Alliance (NHA), which we chair, to make our services more accessible. By streamlining communication within the NHA, we ensure that important subjects are conveyed clearly and effectively, making the process more organised and focused for our residents. This approach helps mitigate the personal upheavals faced when dealing with homelessness.
- 4.7. Broadland and South Norfolk Councils have also been able to continue partnership working within the NHS, using our District Direct team. Operating out of the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital (NNUH), our team works between A&E and ward patients who are pending discharge. Many individuals at the NNUH face delays in their discharge for non-medical reasons, such as unsafe or hoarded homes. District Direct can liaise with the relevant services to facilitate quicker discharges for patients who historically would have been unable to easily discharge home, despite being medically ready to leave. This enables our intervention to ensure that individuals are being safely discharged into an environment that sees they can continue living independently. Since conception, the District Direct team has seen a steady increase in service use that is projected to continue supporting the NNUH.

## **Responding to growing demand**

### **Leaving prison**

- 4.8. The Greater Norwich & Breckland Criminal Justice Homelessness Prevention Protocol has been under review to ensure recent changes in pressures are being considered in our approach. Subsequently, this has meant we have created a Housing Support Officer role that specialises in criminal justice in October 2021. Prior to this, there was no equivalent role that allowed for this specialist knowledge and reactive service. This role allows collaboration with the prison service to provide focus towards reviewing upcoming releases of individuals from prison into probation. A new role within the prison services as an accommodation specialist means these two roles can work together to offer an improved service around release.
- 4.9. The insight into upcoming demand has had a positive impact on how individuals can be supported and allows services to prepare accordingly with upcoming pressures. With the current political landscape seeing a rise in number of early releases into probation, it is crucial that we continue to have insight into release dates, what level of support might be needed, and prepare early involvement to allow individuals to have support in place for their release. We also have a multi-agency MAPPA (Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements) process consisting of central government, the probation service, and Association of Chief Police Officers, for higher risk individual cases, which currently takes form in weekly meetings to discuss upcoming and ongoing cases.

- 4.10. Having contact with individuals being released from prison into probation also allows us to ensure that they have the details of appropriate support they can contact, giving those leaving prison a better chance to be able to communicate with services that are able to offer effective support. Norfolk is a CAS-3 pilot area, a service that offers prison leavers temporary accommodation and support for up to 84 nights, with assistance to move into settled accommodation. For this, we have been able to set up good relationships with landlords in the area to support those moving on from temporary accommodation into more permanent accommodation. A key part of this has been attracting financial support for customers to help with the upfront costs needed to access accommodation through grants rather than loans. We have seen success in being able to identify gaps in homelessness prevention with members of the Greater Norwich Homelessness Forum to inform and improve service delivery across the statutory and voluntary sector.
- 4.11. Over a 2-year period, the Solo Project, a female-based offender project was run, using funding from Norfolk Police and the Home Office for £2k per person for private accommodation. This project came to an end due to funding, and for future iterations to be possible it would need to be reviewed to ensure success in providing the right level of needs support to ex-offenders. Our uptake in this project was low with approximately 8 cases in 2023. This is an area we recognise as needing more awareness created for and are looking to see how we can further this piece of work in the future, with conversations currently taking place to discuss how we approach this project moving forwards.

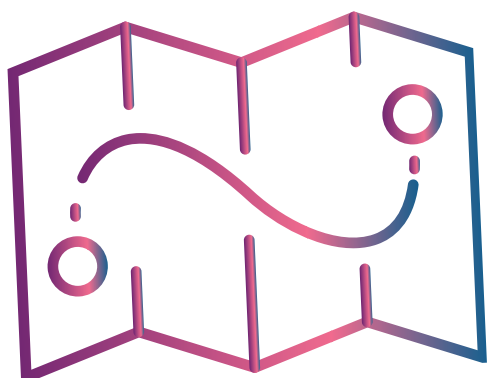
## **Mental health**

- 4.12. Discharge from mental health wards, housing and ongoing mental health support continues to be a challenging area. The Norfolk Mental Health Hospital Discharge and Homelessness Prevention Protocol was not fully signed off and thus not implemented. However, the Complex Health and Housing Access Panel (CHHAPs) has been initiated, involving both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils, Norfolk Constabulary, NSFT, and the mental health social work team from Norfolk County Council. The purpose of this panel is to hold case-based discussions and share information around mental health and housing issues, taking place fortnightly. We have also engaged in external training by mental health services to improve our ability to deal with supporting these cases and provide the best support possible for individuals.

## **People from Abroad**

- 4.13. During the lifetime of this strategy, the numbers of people from abroad in Broadland and South Norfolk has grown; from Ukrainian guests to asylum claimants in contingency accommodation and resettled refugees. All of whom have their own stories, needs, wishes and access to applicable services.
- 4.14. Under working towards the Joint Protocol to Address the Needs of Homeless Young People in Norfolk, Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) have been better supported due to raised awareness. Regular meetings are held with external stakeholders around discussions of how to provide support, with representatives from children's services including UASC attend the Norfolk-wide HAALO (Housing, Advice and Allocations Lead Officer Group).

- 4.15. Our bespoke Ukraine team worked tirelessly to welcome guests and to help integrate them into their new communities. The team also helped to prevent hosted placements from breaking down, to seek host rematches and housing solutions for Ukrainian guests in temporary accommodation. In addition, we held two drop-in sessions in November and December 2023 for people recently granted refugee status. As a result of being granted this

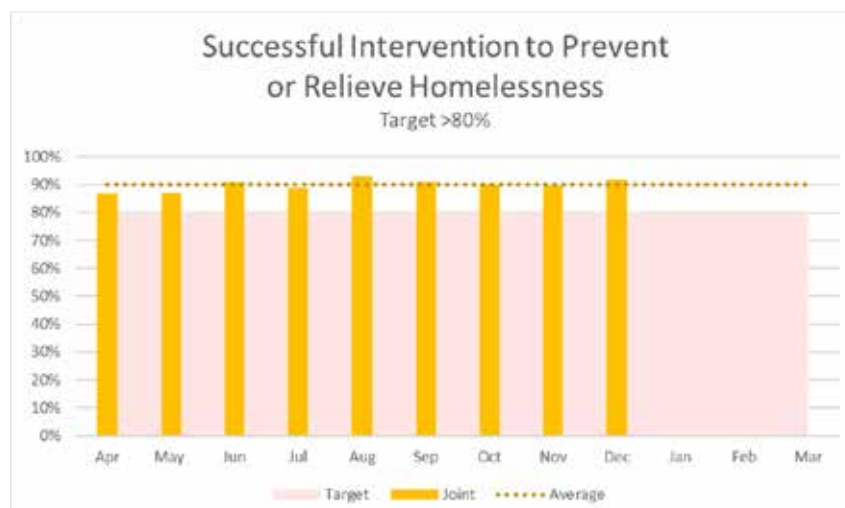


status, they had been given notice to leave their contingency hotel and therefore became at risk of homelessness. At the first session each attendee was given the opportunity to talk to a housing solutions officer, offered translation services, make a homeless application, provided with housing advice, and initially assessed for priority need. We had a development worker from the County Council's People from Abroad Team attend in addition to a representative from the Bridge+. The Council's Ukraine team greeted the refugees as they arrived to ensure they felt welcome. For the second session, we learned from the first and hosted a longer session time to allow for complexities of their stories and for translation. We also booked to avoid mealtimes and at a venue within walking distance of their accommodation.

- 4.16. Overall, we had approximately 38 people attend over both sessions, and while not all had an apparent priority need, all were supported with housing advice including how to access the private rented sector and supported accommodation. Most importantly, we were able to work with the refugees at an as early as possible stage and to try and give them some clarity on their future housing options and give them the knowledge of where to come for support in the future.
- 4.17. As well as internal training taking place and management resource being provided towards good collaborative working with other agencies to relieve homelessness, the following steps have been taken to ensure we have appropriate training in place:
- External briefing sessions on e-visas and training which relates to the systems used in Norfolk to support Ukrainian guests.
  - Conflict resolution or conflict management training and mediation practices training for working with Ukrainian guests and their hosts.
  - Trauma informed training for the Housing and Benefits Team.
  - Attendance at County and regional meetings.

## Private Rental Market

- 4.18. With the average price of private rental properties in the UK increasing steadily over the past three years, and by 8.6% in the 12 months up to July 2024, we have seen the private rental sector (PRS) become increasingly untenable due to cost and directly impact onto the risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. This has had a significant influence on success in delivering targets around supporting residents to remain in their own homes within the PRS market. Several prevention measures have not been successful due to the pressure the PRS demand has caused.
- 4.19. However, the proportion of our overall demand remains consistent despite the rising numbers requesting support – our percentage of prevention figures have remained constant in the measure we have in place. In terms of our statutory duty, in Broadland the average time between the prevention duty start date and end date is approximately 35 days, and in South Norfolk it is 63 days.







## The use of data

- 4.20. In line with H-CLIC (Homelessness Case Level Collection) data monitoring, this data is pulled into the quarterly performance review. This has allowed significant data to be obtained for all housing areas and allow for data-led system changes to take place and better support our services, as well as play a key role in our decision making and operational management. Whilst this has been significant in playing a role in where best to allocate resources, further uniformity is needed in the completion of this data to best spotlight any patterns or trends. Currently, this data is not reported into the Greater Homelessness forum, as this forum was disbanded in 2022. Plans are currently being discussed for how our Councils can move forward in the future with Norwich City Council to support homelessness.
- 4.21. To understand our Housing Demand and the anticipated future demand on our services, the Housing team commissioned external consultants in 2021. Following this analysis, we purchased additional temporary accommodation to meet the anticipated growth in demand in a cost-effective manner, and to maintain our best-in-class support to vulnerable residents. This also informed our Housing Allocations policies to ensure these continue to be effective. In 2024 an up-to-date analysis was undertaken on our demand and future demand, which is allowing us to continue plan our services accordingly to ensure we continue to give the best service.



## Supporting Independence

- 4.22. We have provided support and training around how to develop better life skills to those in temporary accommodation to give them the tools needed for moving onto more permanent housing. This includes training on life skills such as managing bills and incomes, and how to budget well, as well as career or education support and sign posting. We have also focused on providing support to households at risk of homelessness being able to stay in their own homes following contact with our housing options services. To assist with this work, we have created the 'Whatever It Takes' fund to help support residents. This is a fund accessible to officers to be able to provide financial steps in preventative measures for homelessness for individuals and families. This has been possible through actions such as bettering our relations with the PRS, mediating familial difficulties, and acquiring temporary accommodation.







## **Better allocating resource**

- 4.23. During this period, additional temporary accommodation has been acquired in both Broadland and South Norfolk. South Norfolk Council purchased a property with 27 homes based in South Norfolk that gives individuals facing homelessness access to self-contained properties. Purchasing this TA property has allowed us to offer family-appropriate support to a wider pool of customers. Several TA accommodation units were also purchased in 2023 by both Councils, allowing us to offer properties with communal kitchen and diner facilities, with individual bedrooms and ensembles. This second property has successfully supported single person homelessness, ensuring that between both properties we are able to offer TA to a wider pool of people. This has been a successful initiative that has also reduced the number of spot-purchase beds we have had to use for temporary accommodation. As demand continues to grow, this is an ongoing consideration for our forward plans in tackling homelessness.
- 4.24. Over the past three years, our Housing and Benefit team has been adjusted within a wider department restructure to help make the working relationship between services better aligned to a smoother customer journey. We have updated our Housing and Benefits team to work as one team between Broadland and South Norfolk to ensure we can give customers more holistic support, having invested in training for our Housing and Benefit advisers. We have increased our number of officers to respond to the growing demand, as well as changing our software providers to better utilise the technology available within our preventative work. This has meant that, with multiple additional specialist posts having been created within our organisation, we have worked to ensure these new posts could become embedded into our organisation with support from management to be able to be as effective as possible.
- 4.25. Using the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) dashboard we have been able to provide early identification of those who may be at risk of homelessness, assisting those with financial difficulties with support in benefit uptake and conversations with our financial risk team. Our Financial Wellbeing Coordinator can use LIFT data extracts to target funding towards individuals who may not have been aware they were eligible for payments. We have also aligned our Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to make sure evictions are avoided at all points.
- 4.26. Within our housing team, we have created a more efficient process in triaging information in initial enquiries, which has allowed us to create the role of a floating support worker within our rough sleeper service. This role is to aid and be present for all those who have been provided support, intending to mitigate any risk of them falling back into behaviours or circumstances that result in them returning to rough sleeping. Our resettlement and accommodation team have focused their efforts on ensuring that not only those who have recently provided leave to remain are ready to take on a settled home but are a continued presence once customers have moved in, to provide that safety net of support preventing homelessness.

## 5. Priority 3

### Single and Youth Homelessness

#### Supporting Independence

- 5.1. We have prioritised ensuring that 1-bedroom properties will be available for service users across Broadland and South Norfolk. Since 2020, we have made 734 1-bedroom properties available in South Norfolk, and since 2021 in Broadland, we have made 437 1-bedroom properties available.
- 5.2. Broadland Housing tenants can apply for free Tenancy and Independent Living Skills (TILS) training. These workshops, available both digitally and in-person across Norfolk, cover areas such as budgeting, self-care, and digital skills to help tenants build confidence and resilience. This has been successfully set up and delivered by one of our Housing and Benefits managers.
- 5.3. The 'Direct Lets' scheme trialled shared tenancies to ensure supported housing vacancies are available to young people who need them. This was launched in Broadland to try and alleviate young single female homelessness by supporting them to maintain a home. The initial outcomes of this scheme were not successful with the original cohort of individuals trialled, meaning that currently this scheme is on hold and will be re-visited in the future when a more sustainable approach is developed. The potential reduction in supporting people money from County has opened opportunities within this area and the council is actively exploring additional options with the aim of alleviating single persons homelessness. Additional funding streams have also been explored to provide mediation for young people and families before crisis wherever possible, but uptake was low, so it was more suitable to invest elsewhere.

#### Partnership Working

- 5.4. Staff have been trained in mediation and are therefore able to mediate between families if required. South Norfolk and Broadland Councils also have a history of working with BREAK charity closely to project young care leavers and support them to move on in a planned way to avoid homelessness. We are providing a crucial connection between BREAK and landlords to help identify properties and the right candidates for those properties. This has seen small numbers in uptake but has a high success rate and therefore is highly successful. Alongside continuation of this, there are several workstreams currently taking place regarding children's services and future cohered to develop plans.
- 5.5. Funding has also been successful in funding Nightstop, a YMCA scheme that allows a young person aged 16-25 up to 5 nights in a family home. These family homes are those who are already involved in foster care and are trained and able to provide the right kind of support. This scheme can be used in several scenarios that gives either parents or the young person a break and hopefully prevent the young person from being in a position of becoming homeless. This successful scheme comes from over 15 years of working in partnership with the YMCA.
- 5.6. We are also strengthening our relationship with the Eastern Landlords Association, seeing how we can better bridge the relationships between ourselves and providing real options for tenancies for our service users.

## 6. Priority 4

### Financial Inclusion, Welfare Reform and Economic Growth

#### Supporting Independence

- 6.1. We have looked to provide excellent results in our economic delivery to support and enable the delivery of the ambitions of the Economic Strategies and the Greater Norwich Local Plan across the local authority areas and support the Inclusive Growth agenda at a County and Local Authority level by improving access to skills, training, and employment opportunities.
- 6.2. To support access to training, skills and employment opportunities, our TILs workshops are helping individuals progress their employability. We have utilised the Shared Prosperity Fund to support the delivery of community-based employability advice and support. Further to this, we are delivering in-house employability support to help customers back into employment or to improve their career prospects. We are working alongside the DWP and partners in the sector to link customers into training and qualification opportunities and are providing bespoke advice to improve application and interview outcomes.
- 6.3. Since 2022, Broadland and South Norfolk Councils have operated the Business Builder programme. Whilst predominantly supporting established businesses to grow, it also provides a foundation element, with training, advice, and guidance to support individuals who are looking to start their own business. This programme is sometimes the only available support to individuals without capital and guides them through the pitfalls of self-employment and how to write a business plan, cash flow forecast, and grant application.
- 6.4. Additionally, our dedicated in-house Carrowbreck Training Centre also provides courses for individuals to improve their skills in Microsoft Office, social media, personal development, and customer care, first aid and many more skill-based courses. This training helps individuals to be ready to work and increase their employability.
- 6.5. Learning from the achievements made within each Council over the last 5 years and to continue to produce sustained delivery of affordable, we have focused our efforts on building the right properties to meet existing and future demand. Since 2018, the Councils have enabled the delivery of more than 3,000 affordable homes across both districts for both affordable rent properties and home ownership properties, 1,449 in Broadland and 1,564 in South Norfolk, working in partnership with various registered providers. This number of properties far exceeds the Greater Norwich Local Housing Needs Assessment 2021 requirement of 95 new homes per annum in Broadland and 169 in South Norfolk. Our goal remains to sustain delivery for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025, to ensure that the outcomes remain on target.
- 6.6. All completed rented units have been provided to good space standards and have delivered a range of 1-, 2-, 3- & 4-bedroom houses, bungalows and flats including some that are wheelchair accessible bungalows. These are suitable for allocation to any household with a wheelchair user living within, thus promoting sustainable tenures. All new homes fully comply with Building Regulation requirements around energy efficiency that were

in place at the time planning permission was granted. Our Housing Solutions Officer (Early Intervention & Prevention Specialist) has strengthened our internal Employability Teams link with those most at risk of unsecured tenancy. This has been done by pulling on the Employability Teams expertise in providing advice and support on sustaining employment. This has been linked with the work we are undertaking with those leaving the care system, so these young adults are able to develop the right skills, have increased chances of positive job interview experiences and are able to put into practice what is taught in attaining a job. We have furthered our work in this area by also teaching these service users how to live by yourself, what rent covers, what bills are needed to be paid and other life necessities to afford and sustain tenancy. Like our updated practice in reaching out to residents who may not be applying for all the benefits they are entitled to, we have identified an area that has only meant short-term success in the past but now has more opportunity to provide independence and autonomy to those who need the most support.

### **Better allocating resource**

- 6.7. Residents and customers can contact us in a range of ways, allowing them to choose the right method and timing for them and their individual situation. Our online Housing Register form is accessible and available 24/7 for those who can access the internet, as well as face-to-face appointments being available Monday-Friday 8:18am-5pm. This also includes specialised and targeted drop-in session windows, such as our refugee drop-in sessions. We have ensured an effective triage service has been introduced that allows the right service to be provided at the right time.



- 6.8. The increased cost of private rents, and a reduction in the number of available properties, is resulting in several residents in temporary accommodation unable to move on, as their income is not at a level where they can afford to do so. To help alleviate the pressure the Council is implementing a private rental sector model (PRSM) as a 'move on offer' of a private tenancy that the customer will be able to afford. This model can be utilised to move suitable households out of TA into this accommodation or move households straight into this accommodation without the need for TA placement. This will offer a wider range of suitable accommodation options for our residents. Tenants will be assessed for how much they will be able to afford and will be provided support by the Council to help them improve their financial situation to be able to afford a tenancy in the private rental market.

### **Reaching more vulnerable residents**

- 6.9. To explore and develop our ability to support all residents, we are continuously adjusting and reviewing our service to include provisions for those with additional needs. This is something we know needs focus in our future attentions on in certain areas; for example, Broadland currently does not have ownership of accessible temporary accommodation. South Norfolk has one site with self-contained accommodation, 6 units that are disability adapted, and we have recently acquired and refurbished a disability accessible bungalow providing 4 units of accommodation as a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO). Furthermore, when individuals placing into TA, we always try to consider impacts on school and education, work, transport links to friends, family, and the wider community, but recognise this is not always achievable.



## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025 has made significant strides in addressing homelessness through a comprehensive and collaborative approach. By focusing on early intervention, partnership working, and better resource allocation, the strategy has successfully supported vulnerable residents, including those fleeing domestic abuse, care leavers, and individuals being released from prison. The introduction of innovative roles such as the Early Prevention Officer and the Criminal Justice Housing Support Officer has enhanced the councils' ability to prevent homelessness and provide tailored support.
- 7.2. The expansion of social prescribing services and the operational Help Hub Community Engagement Van have improved access to support for residents in rural areas. The Sanctuary Scheme has provided crucial safety measures for domestic abuse survivors, while the councils' efforts in delivering affordable housing have exceeded targets, ensuring long-term stability for many households.
- 7.3. Overall, the strategy's achievements highlight the importance of a holistic and proactive approach to tackling homelessness, ensuring that support is accessible, targeted, and sustainable. As the councils look towards the next iteration of the strategy, these successes will inform and guide future efforts to continue making a positive impact on the lives of residents in Greater Norwich.

### Appendix A: Table of themes

	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
Reaching more vulnerable residents				
Partnership working				
Better allocating resource				
Supporting independence				
Prioritising early intervention				
Respond to growing demand				
The use of data				