NORWICH
City Council

Homelessness Strategy (2020-2025) and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2022-2027) Review

Executive Summary

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1. Introduction

1.1. Housing authorities are required by legislation (Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) to carry out a periodic review of homelessness in their area. The purpose of the review is to determine the extent to which the population in the district is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, assess the likely extent in the future, identify what is currently being done and by whom, and identify what resources are available to prevent and tackle homelessness.

1.2. Local housing authorities should use this understanding of homelessness in their area to inform their Homelessness Strategy, and they are obliged by legislation to involve partners in this process. In addition, the Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities sets out some requirements for a Homelessness Strategy.

1.3. A homelessness strategy should -

1.3.1. Align with broader factors contributing to homelessness, including health, wellbeing, employment, and economic challenges.

1.3.2. Ensure consistency with wider corporate strategies and organisational goals.

1.3.3. Engage key partners in delivering the strategic objectives around homelessness.

1.3.4. Include a clear Action Plan outlining how the objectives will be met.

1.3.5. Be subject to ongoing monitoring and regular review throughout the duration of the Strategy.

1.4. This document reviews the priorities set out in The Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025 and the Norwich Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 – 2027. The review of these outcomes will also help shape the next version of the strategy, which will integrate both homelessness and rough sleeping priorities for Norwich.

2. Key Findings

3. Demand and Drivers of Homelessness

3.1. Norwich alone accounted for 55%

3.2. Homelessness approaches in Norwich have increased significantly in recent years. The number of approaches rose from 1,750 in 2022-2023 to a peak of 2,366 in 2023–2024, before reducing slightly to 2,052 in 2024-2025.

3.3. The end of private rented tenancies (Assured Shorthold) remains the leading cause of homelessness, accounting for 33% of prevention cases in 2024-2025.

3.4. Domestic abuse continues to be a main driver of homelessness: representing 13.2% of prevention and 19.1% of relief duties.

3.5. Evictions from supported housing have also remained consistently high: making up 15.8% of relief duty cases.

Rising domestic abuse and supported housing evictions call for targeted intervention and stronger partnership work with providers.

4. Prevention and Relief Cases

4.1. Norwich has experienced a steady and significant rise in both prevention and relief cases over the last three years.

4.2. In 2023-2024, 418 households were assessed as being owed a prevention duty, representing a sharp increase following the dip seen in 2022-2023. This figure rose further in 2024-2025, reaching 620 households.

4.3. Norwich represents 66.2% of prevention cases in Greater Norwich in 2024-2025. This higher percentage indicates that Norwich

4.4. Norwich represents 47.3% of relief cases in Greater Norwich in 2024-2025. Less than half of the total in Greater Norwich. This indicates that while Norwich is still a significant part of crisis response, relief duties are more evenly spread across the wider area

4.5. However, the volume remains high, indicating continued demand at the point of housing crisis.

Continue to prioritise early intervention and prevention. To reduce reliance on relief-stage interventions and better support households before homelessness occurs

The data suggests that prevention work in Norwich is proving effective, particularly in addressing loss of ASTs and asylum accommodation before reaching the relief stage.

5. Support Needs of Households

5.1. Highest identified needs: mental health problems, domestic abuse, physical health/disability, and history of offending.

5.2. Norwich shows elevated rates of applicants with offending histories and rough sleeping, due to its central role in hosting HMP Norwich and supported housing services.

Continue to equip staff with training to deliver integrated, trauma-informed support for households with complex needs.

6. Rough Sleeping

6.1. Rough sleeper count increased from 5 in 2023 to 12 in 2024, reflecting a growing challenge but still within national norms.

6.2. Norwich is an area of 'flow', attracting individuals from across Norfolk due to its services and infrastructure. As a result, Norwich sees higher transitory rough sleeping, with people often moving in from surrounding districts.

6.3. Delays in accessing settled accommodation are impacting rough sleeping numbers, including constraints in affordable housing supply and move on accommodation options.

6.4. Norfolk County Council's decision to reduce Housing Related Support (HRS) funding has significant implications, impacting 237 bed spaces in Norwich. Several providers have been decommissioned or are now operating with funding reductions of 20% to 30%.

6.5. Pathways Norwich remains a key support for the city's most vulnerable individuals but has also been affected by the recent Housing Related Support funding reductions. Future multi-year funding announcements for rough sleeping services were announced by Government in late 2025, which should provide greater certainty for the continuation of this vital service.

6.6. Many of the individuals supported by the Pathways team face significant barriers to accessing the physical and mental health care they need. These challenges are complex and varied, often including factors such as diagnostic overshadowing, digital exclusion, a transient lifestyle, and past negative experiences with services. The Pathways team is multi-disciplinary and includes two mental health professionals, which helps promote inclusion and enables the team to engage with people on their own terms. While the team provides an outstanding service to some of our most vulnerable residents, commissioners acknowledge that there are still gaps in provision particularly in areas such as Adult Social Care and drug and alcohol support.

Collaborate to review and enhance the hostel eviction protocol. Offer support to hostel providers and focus on early intervention to lower eviction rates from supported housing.

Focus on increased provision of stable, affordable accommodation and move-on options.

Identify and evaluate gaps within the Pathways Norwich service through improved data collection, to support

7. Temporary Accommodation

7.1. The average number of people in temporary accommodation (TA) increased from 312 (2022/2023), 375 in (2023/2024) and 403 (2024/2025)

7.2. Heavy reliance on pay-nightly placements highlights a critical need for longer-term, stable TA investment.

Explore opportunities to invest in temporary accommodation to reduce reliance on pay nightly accommodation

8. Future Demand and Strategic Risks

8.1. Pressures include refugee and asylum dispersal, early prison releases, cuts to supported housing, and barriers to affordable housing delivery.

8.2. Changes to, and the introduction of, government legislation and policy including potential reforms to the immigration system, the introduction of the Renters' Rights Act, and the Government's national plan to end homelessness will have a significant impact on homelessness services.

8.3. These trends underscore the urgent need for strategic investment in prevention, supported housing, and temporary accommodation.

Ongoing investment in prevention and strengthened collaboration with partners to support prevention efforts, especially when working with vulnerable groups such as refugees, ex-offenders, individuals in hostels, care leavers, and people fleeing domestic abuse.

9. Our Key Successes

10. Development and Delivery of Flexible Housing and Support Solutions to Enable People to Safely Move on from Domestic Abuse

10.1. The council is actively working towards accreditation from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA). As part of this process, staff have undertaken extensive training, including trauma-informed approaches, and internal systems are being reviewed to ensure that all aspects within the council's control effectively support individuals affected by domestic abuse.

10.2. Norfolk Independent Domestic Abuse Service (NIDAS) have also undertaken further training with staff including Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence Assessment (DASH) training.

10.3. The council has an established specialist DA housing advisor.

10.4. With support from Norfolk County Council, we have been able to mitigate the impact of housing-related support funding cuts to female-only hostel bed spaces. Norfolk County Council has allocated Domestic Abuse (DA) funding to help sustain this vital accommodation.

10.5. The female-only support service delivered through Norwich Pathways has also been prioritised and preserved, despite funding reductions resulting from Housing Related Support (HRS) cuts.

10.6. The Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) continues to provide funding for a female-only support worker and dedicated bed spaces within the programme.

10.7. The Sanctuary service refers to an initiative that aims to help individuals and families remain safely in their homes when facing domestic abuse. This is achieved by enhancing the security of their home and providing additional support services. Since the service started in April 2023 the council has assisted 234 people. These interventions include - Video Doorbells, security Lighting, additional/improved locks, alleyway gates, improved fencing, letterbox fire bags.

11. Preventing Homelessness: Working with partners and households to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage and for solutions to be sustainable

11.1. The council has recruited specialist Housing Officers focused on supporting refugees, ex-offenders, and individuals affected by domestic abuse. These roles are designed to complement the work of our key partners who most frequently submit Duty to Refer notifications. Officers work closely with a wide range of organisations, including Serco, Norfolk County Council, the Strategic Migration Partnership, local VCSE partners, HMP Norwich, and Probation services. By building strong partnerships and maintaining ongoing communication, the council is fostering a more coordinated approach to early intervention and prevention.

11.2. The council is utilising Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding, Asylum Dispersal Grant, and Homelessness Prevention Grants to offer private rented sector (PRS) incentives to landlords. In collaboration with Let NCC colleagues, we are also working to source new properties, helping to prevent homelessness among our customers.

11.3. Despite funding uncertainties, Pathways Norwich has continued to deliver specialist, collaborative advice and support to some of Norwich's most vulnerable individuals. In 2024, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Rough Sleeping advisors conducted a thorough analysis in partnership with consortium members. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and will help commissioners guide and prioritise future multi-year funding toward areas of greatest need.

11.4. The Sanctuary service refers to an initiative that aims to help individuals and families remain safely in their homes when facing domestic abuse. This is achieved by enhancing the security of their home and providing additional support services. Since the service started in April 2023 the council has assisted 234 people.

12. Focus on more tailored support including single households and young people

12.1. Support for refugees and Ukraine guests people seeking asylum - To further support our refugee community, additional recruitment has been undertaken, resulting in the establishment of a dedicated pathway. This includes a Specialist Prevention and Relief Officer, a Housing Administrative Assistant to support temporary accommodation placements and transitions, and a Specialist Support Team Officer who provides intensive support to individuals regardless of tenure.

12.2. 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).

12.3. Three beds have been block-booked in one of our hostels specifically for refugee customers. This measure ensures that emergency accommodation is readily available, recognising that the asylum process often provides limited notice for individuals to secure more permanent housing. As a result, these individuals are at greater risk of rough sleeping without timely support.

12.4. Accommodation for Ex-Offenders and Criminal Justice Support – The council has coordinated the accommodation for ex-offenders scheme for Norfolk (AFEO) the council created a specialist prevention and admin role to support individuals being released from prison and improving collaboration with the prison and probation service.

12.5. Since 2023, Norwich has supported over 90 ex-offenders into more secure accommodation through the AFEO project. The project's success across Norfolk, and particularly in Norwich, has highlighted the value of a specialist role. The council is therefore committed to continuing this provision even after the national AFEO project comes to an end.

12.6. From June 2024 to June 2025, NSFT mental health professionals working within the Pathways Norwich team supported 290 individuals, including 78 people sleeping rough and 98 hostel residents. Their work extends beyond mental health support, this small team also advocates on behalf of individuals, helping to connect them with the services and care they need. Rather than prescribing solutions, the approach is centred on listening: asking people what they want, not telling them what they need.

12.7. The Pathways Norwich Outreach Service which sits with the charity St Martins, from June 2024 to June 2025 the service provided support to 331 individuals, of which 151 were verified by the team as sleeping rough. Crisis resolution plays a key role in preventing rough sleeping, the cause of which is wide and far reaching.

12.8. The outreach element of the service uses a trauma informed approach in engaging people and includes gender specific support. Daily, targeted outreach ensures that people have access to support, advice and meaningful engagement at a place and time that is convenient to them. Early mornings in the ARC drop-in centre every weekday ensure that everyone has the opportunity to engage with support that they need.

12.9. Preventing further incidents of homelessness and specifically rough sleeping is a vital part of the service. Tenancy engagement provides individuals with the best opportunity to secure and maintain their accommodation long term.

13. Financial inclusion, welfare reform and economic growth: Remove barriers to accessing housing by enabling a prosperous sub-region with high levels of skills, training and employment

13.1. The council is dedicated to creating a fairer, more inclusive city through integrated strategies and partnerships, guided by the Norwich 2040 City Vision (A Fair City), the Community-Led Plan (Fairer Norwich), and the Norwich 2040 Inclusive Economy Vision. These frameworks focus on financial inclusion, equitable access to services, tackling economic disparities, and promoting social mobility and sustainability.

13.2. Since 2019, initiatives like the Norwich Good Economy Commission have explored barriers to economic participation, informing policies such as the creation of the Women's Advisory Committee. The Community-Led Plan reflects resident priorities around access to services, affordable housing, and financial resilience.

13.3. The council has championed fair pay by becoming a Real Living Wage employer in 2012 and continues to push for more living wage employers citywide. In 2024, it committed to adopting the Socio-Economic Duty to embed equity in all policies and services. Procurement prioritises contracts delivering local employment and sustainability benefits.

13.4. The Financial Inclusion Consortium, established in 2015, brings together advice partners to provide independent, tenure-neutral support on welfare, debt, and housing issues. The council funds these services and operates an in-house money advice service for tenants.

13.5. Overall, these efforts have expanded access to financial and wellbeing support, strengthened partnerships, enhanced resident inclusion in decision-making, prioritised equity and social value, and advanced fair pay initiatives to reduce in-work poverty across Norwich.

13.6. Despite planning constraints such as COVID-19, nutrient neutrality, and biodiversity net gain requirements, the Council has successfully secured 239 units of affordable housing, the majority of which are for social rent. An additional 50 units were also secured as additionality.

14. Conclusion

14.1. The review of the Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy (2020 to 2025) and the Norwich Rough Sleeping Strategy (2022 to 2027) highlights both the scale of the challenge and the significant progress made in addressing homelessness and rough sleeping in Norwich. While the city continues to experience high levels of demand, driven by structural housing issues, cost of living crisis, domestic abuse, and systemic pressures such as prison releases and Home Office dispersal accommodation, it has also demonstrated resilience and innovation in its response.

14.2. Key successes include the development of specialist roles, strengthened partnerships, targeted support for vulnerable groups, and the preservation of vital services despite funding constraints. Initiatives such as the AFEO, our dedicated housing pathway for refugees, Sanctuary service, Pathways Norwich, developing NSAP/RSAP accommodation and integrating financial inclusion and health and health and wellbeing officers into the housing service demonstrates a commitment to person-centred support.

14.3. However, the findings also reinforce the urgent need for continued investment in prevention, supported housing, and temporary accommodation. The anticipated ongoing rise in demand, coupled with ongoing funding uncertainties and housing supply challenges, highlights the need for decisive and proactive planning.

14.4. As Norwich prepares to integrate its homelessness and rough sleeping strategies into a unified framework, this review provides a foundation for evidence-based decision-making. Continued collaboration with partners, a focus on early intervention, and a commitment to inclusive, trauma-informed services will be essential to ensuring that all residents have access to safe, secure, and sustainable housing.

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