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## **Blaby District Council**

# **Homelessness Review 2020 – 2025 and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 2030**

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## **Portfolio Holder Statement**

..... to be finalised following consultation period

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## **Key Priorities**

### **Priority One**

Prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

### **Priority Two**

Increase the supply of affordable housing.

### **Priority Three**

Develop partnership work and wider communications to ensure efficient service user led provision.

### **Priority Four**

Supporting vulnerable households to be independent and self-reliant

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## Introduction

Our Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025 – 2030 reviews, builds on, and replaces our existing Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy documents, covering the period 2020-2025.

The Homelessness Act 2002 (Section 1 (1)) places a statutory duty on Housing Authorities to conduct a homelessness review for their district and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review every 5 years as a minimum. This document encompasses both duties.

Additional duties have been introduced via the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 - to produce a strategy that involves partners in earlier identification and intervention to prevent homelessness. As such this strategy will be subject to a 6-week consultation period prior to adoption, engaging with our Key Partners to ensure that our work and theirs combines to meet the needs of our residents.

As part of the homelessness strategy, housing authorities should also develop effective action plans to help ensure that the objectives, targets, and milestones are achieved. To be effective the homelessness strategy will also be based on realistic assumptions and be developed and jointly owned by partners.

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 also placed an expectation on Local Authorities to produce a Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The 2022 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good' strategy set out how the last Government and its partners set out an expectation to work together to deliver on their manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping in the life span of the previous Parliament. It also laid the foundations for long-term system change to end rough sleeping sustainably and for good. This work is expected to continue under the new Government elected in July 2024.

Blaby District Council has brought these duties together to create a collective 'Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025 - 2030'.

### Defining Homelessness

The Housing Act 1996, as amended, defines homelessness as a person who has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere, which is available for their occupation, and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or their accommodation is a moveable structure and there is nowhere it can lawfully be placed to provide accommodation.

A person is threatened with homelessness if they are likely to experience one of the above within 56 days. This includes a valid Section 21 notice.

Prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018, 'threatened with homelessness' occurred at just 28 days. Whilst the Act doubled the threshold in which local housing authorities must carry out prevention work, 56 days is still a relatively short period of time. This time is extremely stressful for customers who worry for their families, and

who need to quickly search for a new home that is affordable and close to their schools, places of work and their family and friends.

The definition of homelessness is more than just those without a home. It includes those without a home that is legally theirs, homes that are unsuitable, homes that cannot be accessed, and it recognises that not all homes are traditional fixed structures.

A wide definition is helpful because it means local authorities will have to work with a wide range of customers in need, however the definition means that the council's duties extend across a larger customer group, adding further pressures to the service.

The analysis of data over the period since the introduction of our last Homelessness Strategy shows that demand to the Housing Options service has been increasing year on year, despite the positive work carried out in Blaby District to prevent and relieve homelessness.

This means that there is more to be done to ensure our residents do not have to experience homelessness.

### **Links with other Blaby Policies and Priorities**

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy is designed with the purpose to support other overarching priorities set out by Blaby District Council to ensure a cohesive approach. As such this Strategy has been aligned with our Corporate Plan so that it assists us to achieve the following priorities:

- Enabling our communities and supporting our vulnerable residents.
- Enhancing and maintaining our natural and built environment.
- Growing and supporting our economy.
- Keeping you safe and healthy.

Moreover, this Homelessness Strategy will seek to contribute to the success of the adopted Housing Strategy 2021-2026 by aligning to its four priority areas, namely:

- Increasing the supply of Affordable Homes
- Provide Specialist Housing for Vulnerable Groups
- Prevent Homelessness and end rough sleeping
- To minimise the environmental impact of the existing housing stock and future housing development

## National Policy Context

This Homelessness Strategy has been developed in line with national policy and legislation, as well as careful consideration of the local context and identified needs. It therefore takes into account the following key national policy documents and legislation:

### **Housing Act 1996**

Local authorities' legal responsibilities to homeless people and those at risk of homelessness are set out in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. The Housing Act 1996 places a range of duties upon each local authority including the requirement to provide advice and assistance and the provision of emergency accommodation in certain circumstances

### **Homelessness Act 2002**

This Act established the requirement for local authorities to have a homelessness strategy published every five years. It requires that the strategy must set out how the local authority will prevent homelessness and ensure that it has adequate accommodation options and support for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.

### **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force on 3 April 2018. It was the biggest change to homelessness legislation in 40 years and brings in new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness.

The key measures in the Act are:

- An extension to the period “threatened with homelessness” from 28 to 56 days
- New duties to prevent or relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need
- A new “Duty to Refer” – a legal requirement for certain services to notify a local authority if they encounter someone they think may be homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless.

There are 12 new clauses contained within the Act which includes the legal requirement to complete an assessment of someone’s circumstances, production of a personal housing plan, free information and advice on specific services, and changes to care leavers local connection criteria.

### **Duty to Refer 2018**

A new Duty to Refer has been introduced and applies to public sector organisations to refer anyone who they believe may be homeless or at risk of being homeless to the local authority for assistance with housing needs. This recognises that other organisations have a responsibility for preventing homelessness by making timely referrals

The duty to refer will help to ensure that services are working together effectively to prevent homelessness by ensuring that peoples' housing needs are considered when they are in contact with other public authorities. It is also anticipated that it will encourage local housing authorities and other public authorities to build strong partnerships, which enable them to work together to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness through increasingly integrated services.

We continue to build upon our existing partnerships to prevent and tackle homelessness and the "ALERT" Duty to Refer portal is being used here in Blaby District Council.

### **MHCLG Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018**

In August 2018, government published their new Rough Sleeping Strategy which sets out their plans to help people who are sleeping rough now and to put in place the structures to end rough sleeping for good by 2027.

To support the strategy, government announced a fund of £100 million to support the delivery of the strategy and a further £45 million for the Rough Sleeper Initiative Fund which aimed to help deliver substantial reductions in the number of rough sleepers being recorded.

An Action Plan was published in December 2018 setting out progress and next steps.

### **Ending Rough Sleeping for Good 2022**

A refreshed strategy, Ending Rough Sleeping for Good, was published by Central Government in September 2022. It focuses on a "four-pronged approach" of prevention, intervention, recovery and ensuring a joined-up transparent approach supported by over £2 billion up to 2025.

### **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**

The aim of this legislation is to raise awareness and understanding about the devastating impact of domestic abuse on victims and families, further improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice and strengthen the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies.

### **Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016**

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a host of changes to welfare benefits, many of which have a direct impact on homelessness issues. These include:

#### **Universal Credit**

Universal Credit was implemented in Blaby in June 2018. All welfare benefit claimants are gradually being moved into payment by Universal Credit, which is a monthly payment of all benefits, including housing benefit. Claims under this system are made online and payments are made into a bank account. Under the latest



plans, managed migration of the final group of legacy benefit claimants will not happen until 2028/29.

Universal Credit has caused concerns over the delays in payment as well as concerns that a monthly lump sum can result in problems for people with limited budgeting skills and those with chaotic lifestyles. This could cause rent arrears and an increased risk around homelessness. Some landlords have already indicated their increased reluctance to accept those in receipt of Universal Credit.

### **Benefit cap**

Welfare reforms have introduced a cap to the financial amount that any one household may receive, including housing benefit payments. The Welfare Reform and Work Act further reduced the cap for families outside London to currently £22,020 (£14,753 for single people).

### **Benefit Sanctions**

Benefit sanctions were introduced by the government to address situations in which claimants have not complied with required activities, for example, failure to attend Jobcentre Plus appointments or training events. Sanctions (non-payment of benefit) can last between one and 156 weeks.

### **Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016**

A change to rent policy has been introduced through the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It requires both Registered Providers and local authorities to reduce rents for social housing by 1% per annum over 4 years, which commenced in 2016/17. This has meant a reduction in monies previously secured for housing and homelessness services.

## **National Homelessness Picture**

Over the lifetime of the previous strategy external factors have presented the Country and the Homelessness sector with significant challenges with impacts felt by all Public Services and the Public. These factors include the Covid Pandemic, global conflict, global supply chain issues, the cost of living crisis and consistently stretched Health and Social Care services. These issues combined with an already existing lack of social housing, and increasingly unaffordable open market and private rented sectors have contributed to a significant increase in those suffering housing insecurity today.

### **Covid Pandemic**

The unique and unprecedented impacts of the pandemic presented our services with several challenges.

The Governments 'Everybody In' campaign, introduced in the very early stages of the pandemic, was critical in addressing the needs of all homeless people. The directive withdrew the requirement for Local Authorities to assess an individual's priority need status and opened the eligibility for immediate temporary accommodation to all those suffering street homelessness. This was a necessary and positive policy to reduce the spread of the virus and protect the health of the population but one that presented Local Authorities with an increased burden for both front-line officers and for the public purse.

These additional challenges were combined with a significant shift in the workforce's ways of working. With Housing Services Officers now working from home having previously been based in a central office environment, significant adaptations were required to ensure that whilst predominantly working remotely, we were still able to meet our statutory duties to our residents. This shift resulted in increased pressure notably on front line officers but also on managers to mitigate the impacts of this change and unfortunately reduced officer time to focus on some of the key aims of our previous strategy in the first one to two years.

### **Global Conflict**

Conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine have also impacted on both National and Local Homelessness services. Refugees from all three conflicts have been awarded special status to reside in Britain and have become the responsibility of Local Authorities to house on their arrival. Whilst the numbers have been small in Blaby this has increased the workload for teams with additional duties being met by specified Homeless Case Officers, reducing time to work on local caseloads.

### **Global Supply Chain Issues and Financial Uncertainty**

One of the key tools in relieving homelessness is the provision of new housing. The increased costs involved in global trade since 2020 have been particularly significant for the building industry. The impacts of the increased costs of materials and import delays caused by the pandemic and Britain leaving the European Union have pushed the costs of building new homes to a record high. Inflation has also had an

impact as both Registered Providers and Private Developers face an increased cost of borrowing leading to a more risk averse approach to large scale housing projects.

As a result, housebuilding has slowed significantly on larger sites and smaller sites have become unviable for both Market Developers and Registered Providers, hampering the ability to house homeless households through the creation of new housing stock.

### **Cost of Living Crisis**

Emerging from the pandemic, global conflicts and financial uncertainty, the cost-of-living crisis in Britain is having a significant and ongoing impact on services. These impacts not only negatively influence the poorest in society but have further reaching implications.

For those struggling to meet their housing needs, the increases in the cost of food and energy, has meant the capability of households to afford their rent and mortgages has diminished significantly. Combined with Private Landlords also suffering from higher mortgage costs and increased maintenance costs due to increased interest rates and subsequently either selling or increasing rents, many households can no longer afford to meet their basic needs.

Subsequently this has left many to rely on social housing as the only viable and affordable way to achieve secure accommodation, placing increased pressure on an already stretched resource.

### **Health, Social Care Overstretch**

Following the delays in care during and after the pandemic, the Health and Social care sector has struggled to catch up with cancelled or missed care opportunities whilst also struggling to keep up with increasing emerging needs.

This has resulted in many households and individuals receiving care too late, most notably those suffering with mental health issues. This has impacted Homelessness Services where individuals and households are presenting to Local Authorities with emergency housing needs but also many other complex health and social care issues. These multiple complexities are making it increasingly difficult for Local Authorities to place households in suitable temporary accommodation for their needs.

# Blaby District Council Demographics

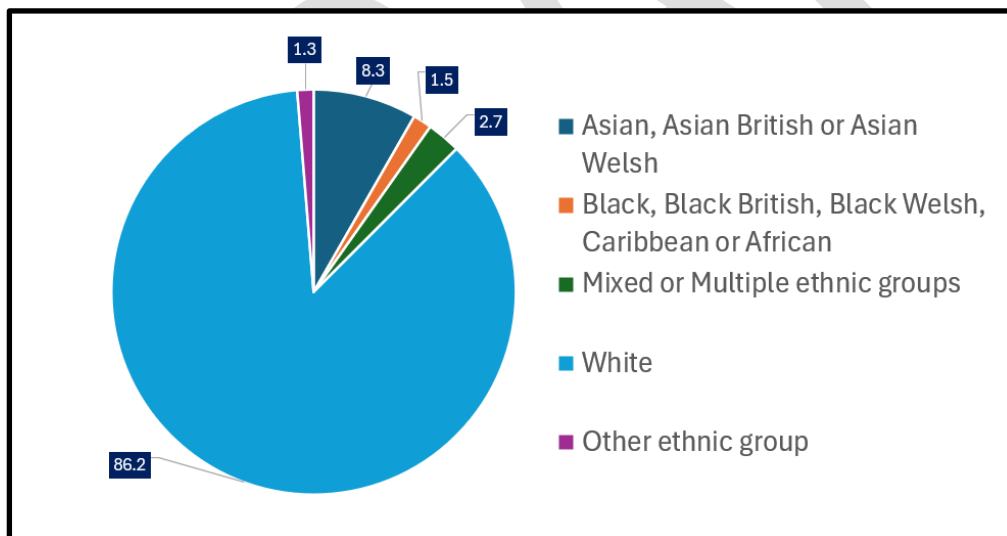
## Population Data

Blaby District has a current Population of 102,926 making up 42,577 Households. This represents an increase of 9.6% since the last census in 2011. Blaby's population has grown at a higher rate than that of the East Midlands as a whole (7.7%) and that of England (6.6%). (Census 2021)

The latest government Population Increase Projections expect this trend to continue with Blaby District outstripping the percentage increase of both the East Midlands and England to reach a population of 112,751 by the year 2041, a further 10% increase against an 8% increase for both the East Midlands and England.

Population	Blaby	East Midlands	Great Britain
2021	102,926	4,885,752	56,989,570
2041	112,751	5,254,064	61,353,965
Percentage rise	10%	8%	8%

## Ethnicity Data



The Ethnicity data for Blaby has changed very little in the intervening ten years since the last census in 2011 with the majority of residents in the White and White British ethnic group (86.2%). The second largest Ethnic Group (8.3%) is people from the Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh population.

## Employment/Unemployment Data

Official ONS Nomis Labour Market Statistics show the following average wages for those in employment in our District. As is shown below, residents of Blaby enjoy a significantly higher average wage than those across the East Midlands and one that is more on par with (but slightly above) the national average.

Gross Weekly Pay	Blaby	East Midlands	Great Britain
Full-Time Workers	£689.90	£640.20	£682.60
Male Full-Time Workers	£706.30	£687.80	£728.30
Female Full-Time Workers	£632.50	£571.10	£628.80

In terms of those not working in the district, the last reliable available figures are from the ONS covering the years 2022 and 2023.

Employment and Benefits Type (18-64)	Blaby Dec 22	Blaby Dec 23	East Midlands Dec 22	East Midlands Dec 23
Employment Rate	87.5%	85.3%	75.2%	75.5%
Unemployment Rate	1.7%	3.0%	2.9%	3.7%
Claimant Count	2.0%	2.0%	3.0%	3.1%
Economic Inactivity	Unknown	13.7%	22.6%	21.6%

The figures show that employment has fallen slightly in Blaby District from 87.5% in the year ending December 2022 to 85.3% in the year ending December 2023. However, these figures do also show that Blaby has a significantly higher employment rate than the East Midlands as a whole. Despite an overall rise in the same timeframe the figure for the East Midlands sits at only 75.5%.

The Claimant Count (those residents between 16-64 claiming out of work employment benefit) has remained stable at 2% across the period. This is again lower than the East Midland rate of 3%.

Due to the fall in employment rates the unemployment rate for Blaby has nearly doubled in that time frame from 1.7% to 3%. Despite this significant rise it remains below the East Midlands average unemployment rate of 3.7%.

Those residents classed as Economically Inactive is also significantly lower than the East Midlands figure. People are classed as "economically inactive" if they are not in employment but don't meet the criteria for being "unemployed". This means they have not been seeking work within the previous four weeks or were unable to start work within the next two weeks. Common reasons include being retired, looking after the home or family or being temporarily or long-term sick and disabled.

### **Deprivation**

Blaby District Council has low levels of overall deprivation and is currently ranked as the 39th least deprived District in England (281 of 317). We are the 2nd least deprived district in Leicestershire behind Harborough District Council (308 of 317), as was the case in 2010. It is worth noting that our neighbouring area of Leicester is measured as the 22nd most deprived area in England with many of our homeless residents having direct connections to both Blaby District and Leicester City.

These measures are based on the 2019 Indices of Deprivation survey compiled by Central Government and are due to be updated in 2025.

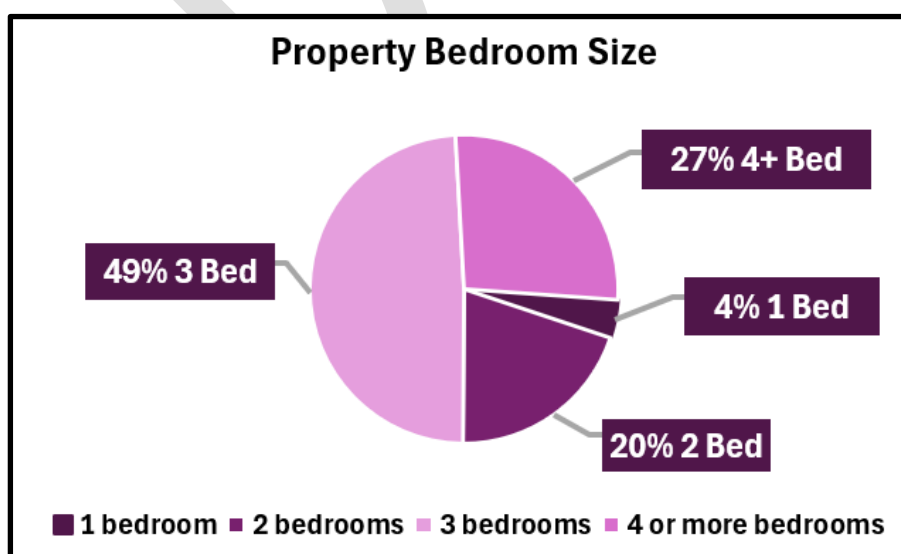
## Housing Profile

According to Census 2021, Blaby District continues to have smaller than average Social Housing and Private Rented Sectors. When compared to the data from the last Census (2011), whilst the Social Housing stock has fallen across England and the East Midlands, it has increased in Blaby, however, remains a much smaller percentage of overall housing stock. The increase in the Private Rented Sector has broadly followed the regional and national picture showing a slight increase. Overwhelmingly, housing in Blaby District is predominantly Owner Occupied stock.

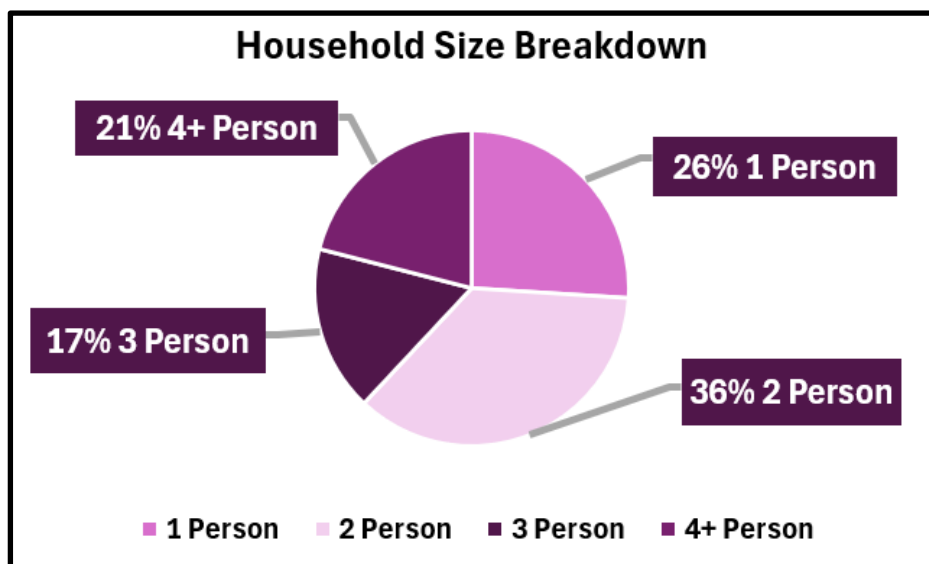
Region	Owner Occupier	Private Rented	Social Rent
Blaby 2011	82%	11%	7%
Blaby 2021	79%	13%	8%
East Midlands 2011	68%	16%	16%
East Midlands 2021	66%	19%	15%
England 2011	64%	18%	18%
England 2021	62%	21%	17%

The majority of the stock is made up of detached and semi-detached properties with a minimal number of flats. The small private rented sector is also mainly distributed in the densely populated areas with very little to none in the rural parishes of the district.

The table below shows the bedroom sizes of the Housing Stock in Blaby. 79% of the property types within the district area are 3 bedroom homes or larger. This imbalance of larger to smaller properties continues into Parish level with all Parishes broadly showing the same housing size splits.



Conversely the Family size breakdown shows that the majority of Households within Blaby are made up of 1 or two people, 62% of all households. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that many of the smaller households must be significantly under-occupying. Whilst recognising that householders might like some spare bedroom capacity; the stock profile shows there is little opportunity for newly forming households or households who wish to downsize to access suitable housing.



House Prices have also risen significantly since the adoption of our last Homelessness Strategy in 2020. The price rises have followed the overall national trend and risen around 20% over the last four years (obviously this is subject to monthly rises and falls as the market expands and contracts due to external economic factors, for example interest rate rises and banking confidence).

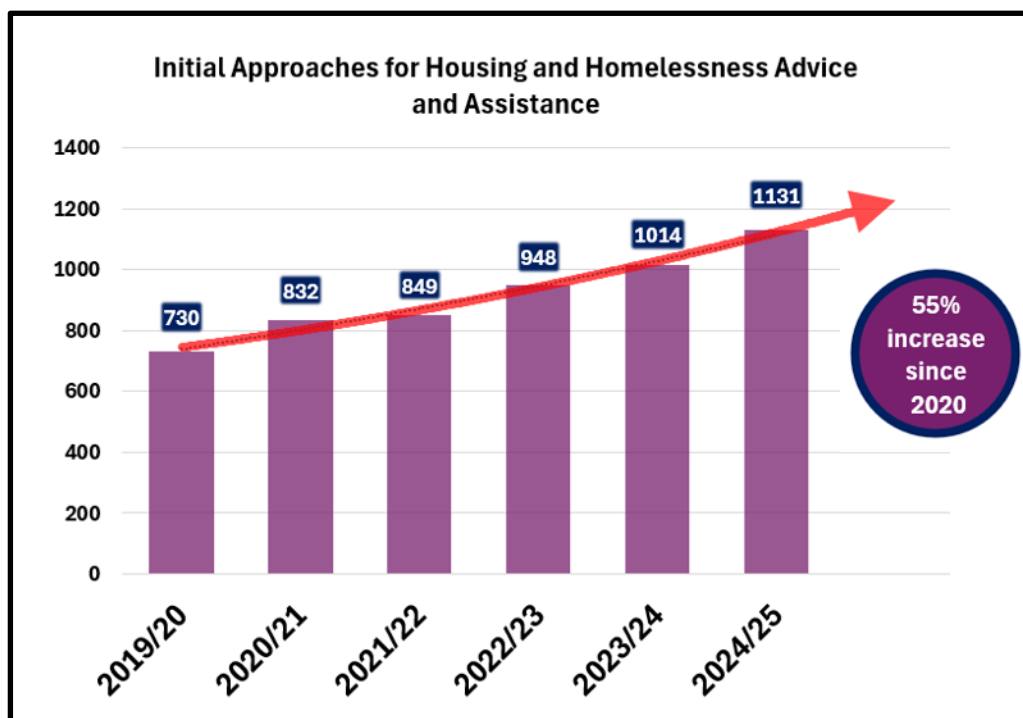
To purchase a property of £287,000 in Blaby, currently a household would need to be earning in excess of £63,000. This is significantly more than 1 ½ times the average income in Blaby of £35,000 per annum making it increasingly difficult for many residents in our district, notably those with young children, to achieve.

Average House Prices 2024	Blaby	East Midlands	Great Britain
Jul-20	£237,734	£200,434	£253,226
Jul-24	£287,880	£246,884	£300,879
Percentage Rise	21%	23%	19%



## Homelessness Trends 2020 – 2024

In the lifetime of the previous Homelessness Strategy, we have seen a significant rise in Homelessness presentations to the Housing Services Team. The first measure to demonstrate this rise is the number of households approaching the service.



As a result of issues within the Private Rented Sector and Affordable housing sector (detailed in following chapters) and combined with the covid pandemic, cost of living crisis and the resultant squeeze on household finances we have seen a significant rise in homelessness in the district. This is borne out in the rise in approaches seen by the Housing Services Triage and Homelessness Teams. How this increase translates into active case work is detailed below.

The measures used to define the cases is detailed here.

### Reason to Believe

Households initially access the Housing Services Team via the Triage system. The triage team determine whether there is significant information (Reason to believe a household is homeless or is facing homelessness) on first approach to pass the case through to the Homelessness Team or whether the household requires just general advice and assistance.

### Case Acceptance

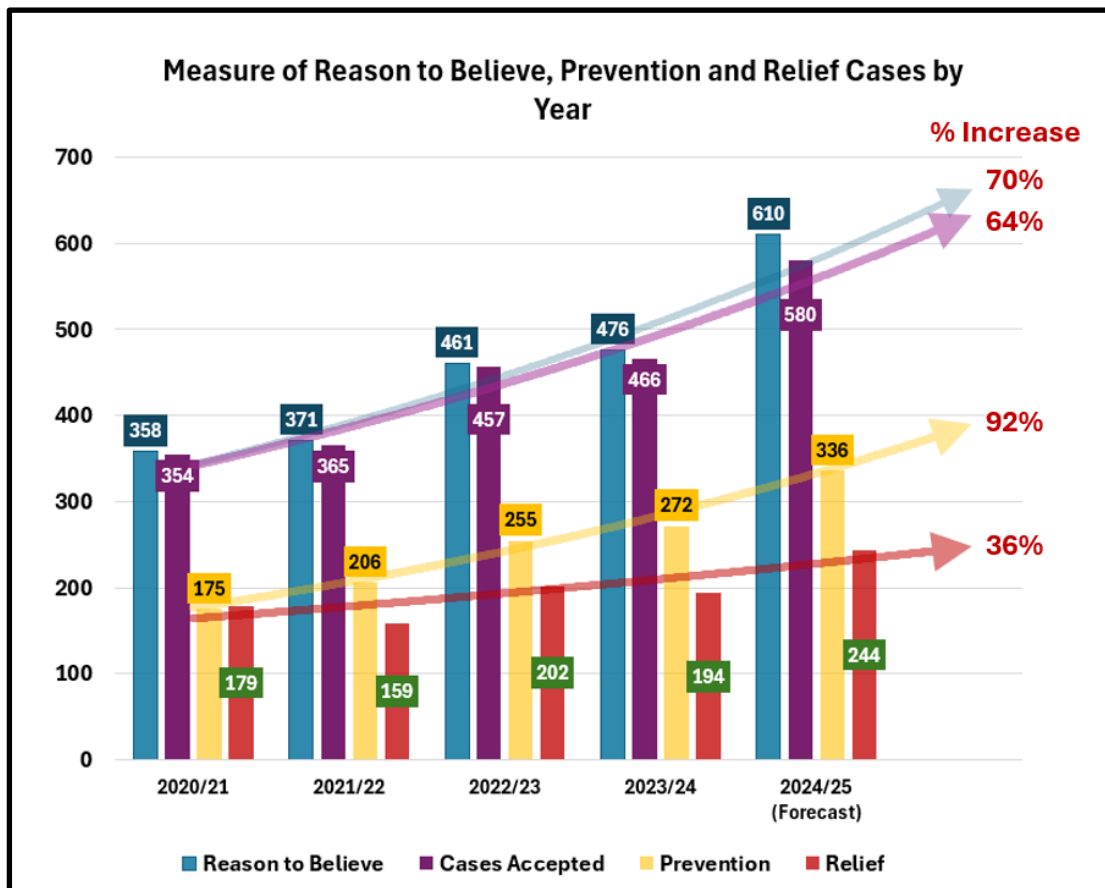
Once passed to a Homeless Officer, the officer will carry out a detailed assessment of the circumstances leading to the applicant approaching the service. The aim of the assessment is to conclude whether the applicant is owed either a Prevention or Relief duty or is not at risk of homelessness within 56 days.

## Prevention Duty

A Prevention duty is awarded to the applicant if they are confirmed to be at risk of homelessness within the next 56 Days.

## Relief Duty

A Relief duty is awarded to the applicant if they are already homeless or there is no prospect of preventing their homelessness from their current accommodation.

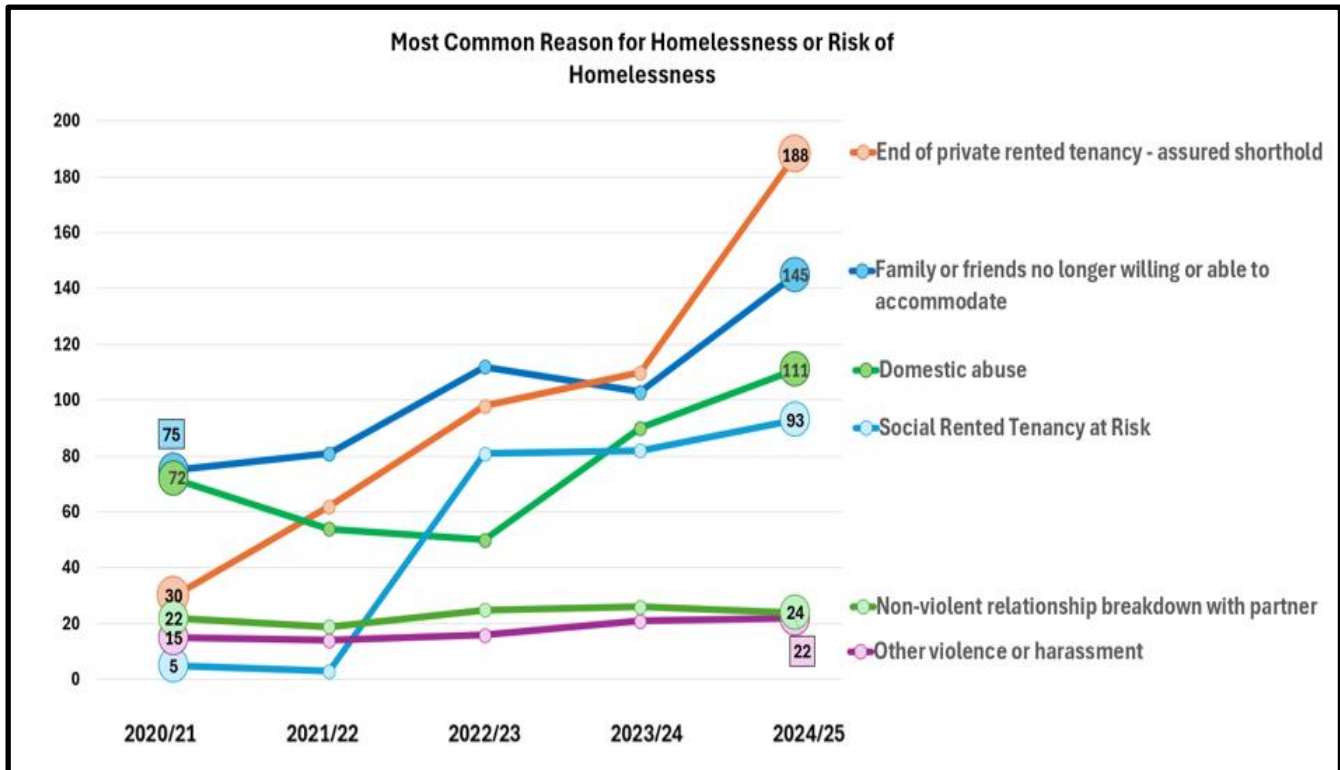


Shown in the data is the increase in footfall and homeless acceptances year on year since 2020. The graph includes a projection of numbers for the current financial year 2024/2025. This is calculated using the data we have to the present day and using an average to predict to the end of the year.

Not only is the rise in cases a cause for concern for the households themselves and an already stretched affordable housing sector and PRS, but it also causes a significant increase in workload for the Triage and Homelessness Teams. Each case represents a family or individual in crisis that require significant support. The additional burden means that Case Officers have less time to spend with each family.

## Causes of Homelessness

There are many reasons for homelessness, however the six main causes have remained static for some time and are listed in the below graph. However, the prevalence of each causation has evolved as the housing environment has changed.



For the first time, the ending of Private Rented tenancies has become our principal reason for homelessness in Blaby, ahead of our historically foremost cause, Family or friends no longer being able to accommodate.

The top two reasons have continued to rise over the last four years and reflect several societal issues. Firstly, as described in the PRS chapter, the industry is becoming increasingly unaffordable for even those tenants who are working, and Private Landlords are moving away from the sector in ever increasing numbers and in so doing must evict tenants in order to sell their properties or increase their rental income.

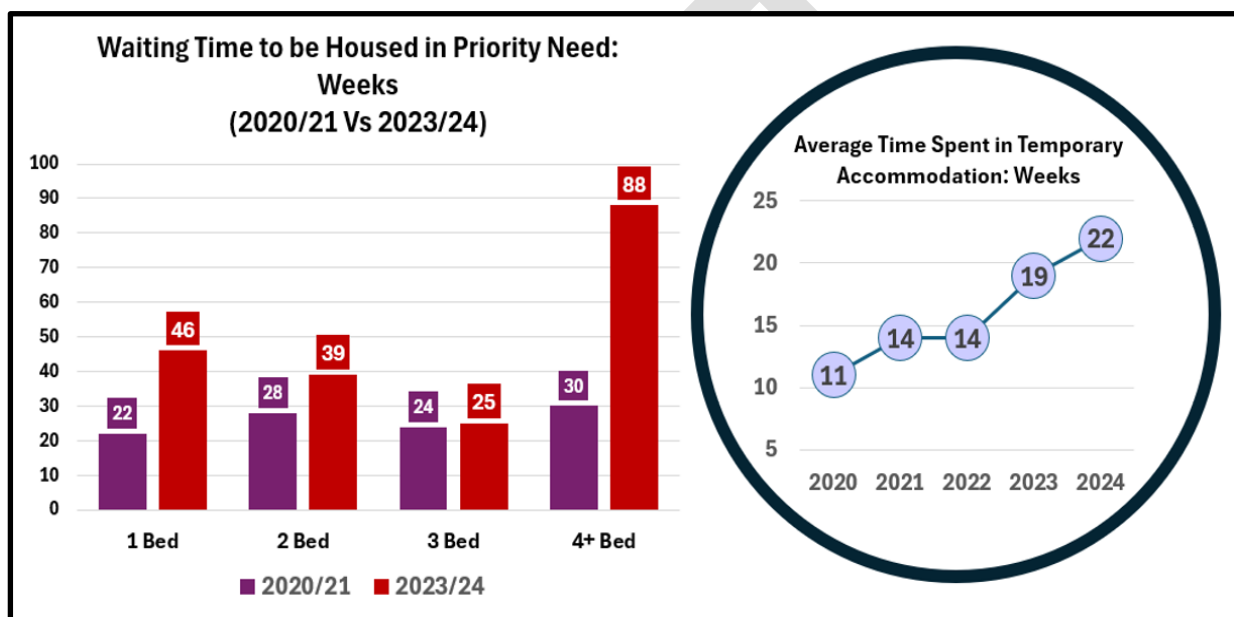
In terms of family or friends no longer willing to accommodate, this is often the result of strained family/friendship relationships due to the amount of time a relative or friend is staying whilst looking for permanent accommodation. Whereas in the past somebody may have been able to stay for a short time and find alternative accommodation of their own, this is again becoming increasingly difficult due to affordability and availability.

The fastest growing cause for intervention from the Housing Services team has been the increase in households at risk of losing Social Housing tenancies. The significant jump in this group has been partly down to a renewed focus in the way we work with

Registered Providers. We now take a much more active role in assisting them with tenants who are experiencing issues, in particular rent arrears. Our tenancy Sustainment Officer has forged very close partnerships with colleagues in the Registered Provider sector allowing us to prevent most cases in this group from being evicted.

Domestic Abuse numbers have sadly increased over the past 2 financial years and therefore remains a major cause for homelessness across the district. It is also often a driver for other types of homelessness through the underreporting of sufferers of the true reasons for their homelessness.

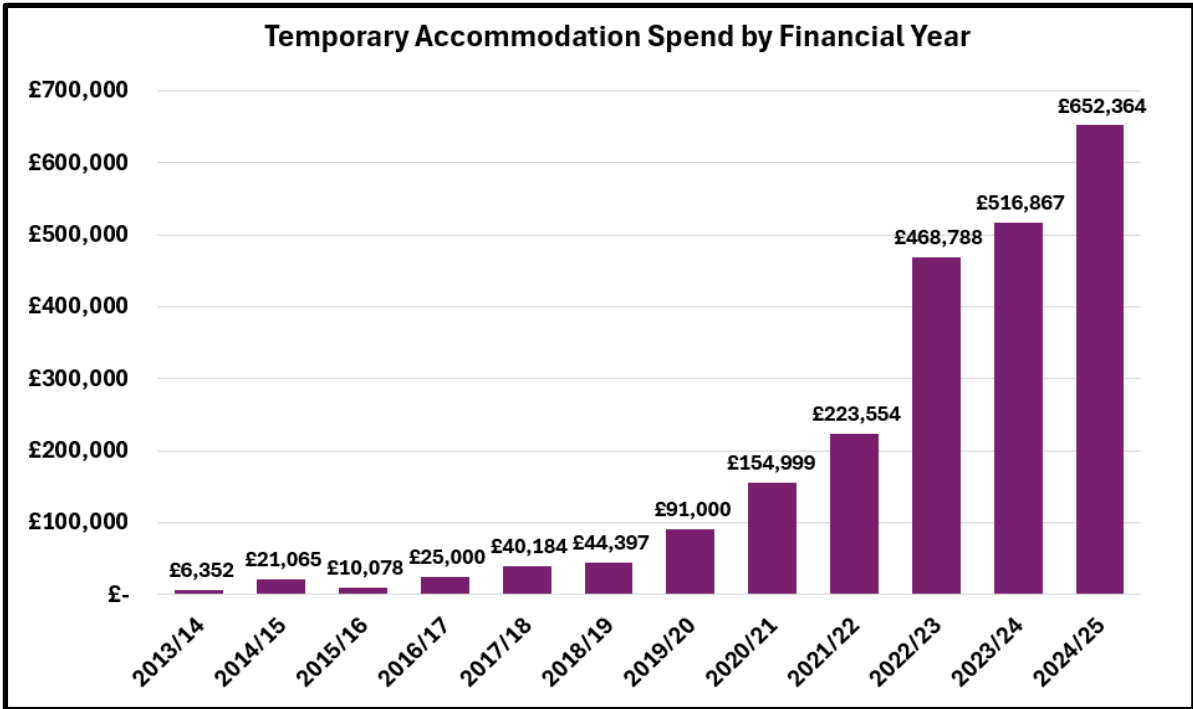
### Impacts of the Rise in Cases: Waiting Times and Temporary Accommodation



The increase in cases, and the decrease in options to resolve them, has meant that households are spending significantly longer periods of time waiting to be housed and increasing the cost of temporary accommodation.

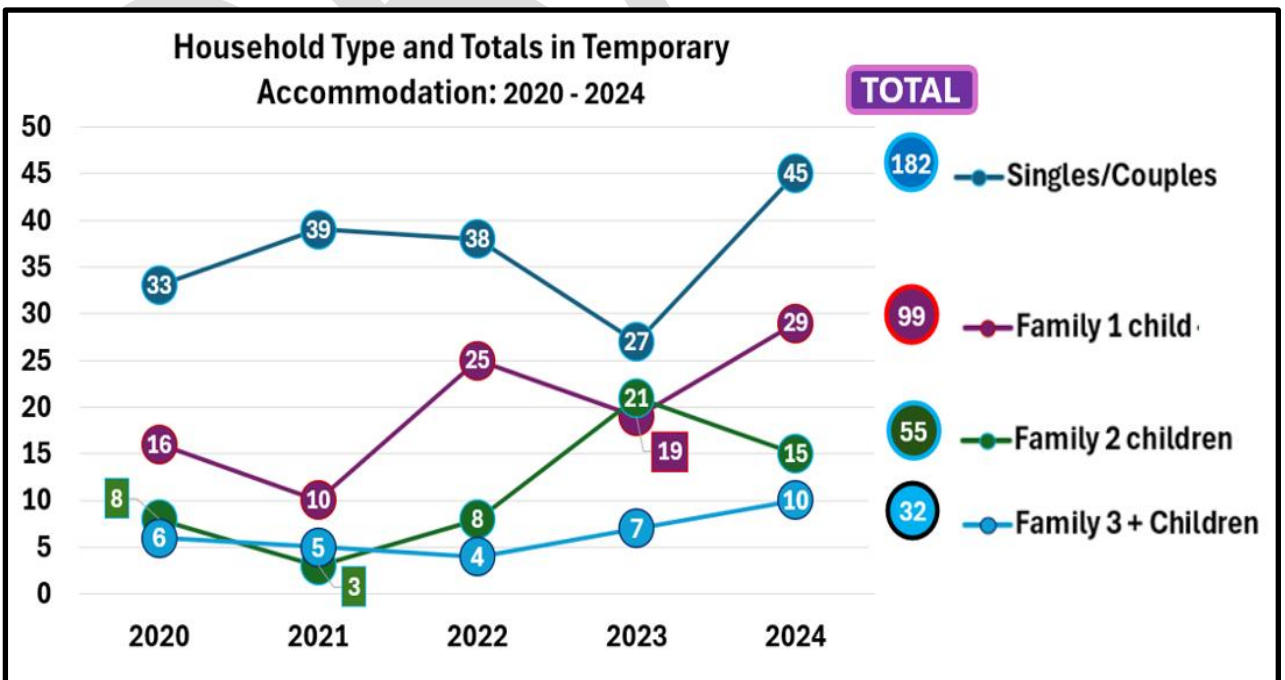
Once a household with children has passed 6 weeks in a Bed and Breakfast placement the law states that they must be moved to a self-contained placement. It is always our aim to house people as appropriately as possible before this legal limit.

As households are waiting longer for accommodation, more households require self-contained accommodation which in the private sector is significantly more costly than Bed and Breakfast therefore increasing our temporary accommodation spend further. The below graph shows our year on year increase in spending.



(n.b. The above graph contains figures for 2024/25 that are forecast using the average weekly numbers from the first 33 weeks of this financial year)

In terms of those residents staying in temporary accommodation the below graph records the different households over the last four years that the Housing Services team have placed in temporary accommodation.



While the numbers have fluctuated over the four years, Single Adults and Adult Couples without children have remained the largest cohort requiring temporary accommodation (50% of all placements between 2020 and 2024)

Households with children automatically require the duty to accommodate whilst single adults or couples without children need to be assessed as having significant additional vulnerabilities to be awarded the same duty.

This cohort is often the most time intensive group for Homelessness Case Officers to manage and present significant challenges. Due to the nature of their additional needs temporary accommodation can prove to have negative impacts on those vulnerabilities with many single households moving between different accommodation placements.

### **Single Homeless Case Study**

Jane (not her real name) presented to the Council as she was fleeing domestic abuse from her marital home. As well as the trauma of experiencing domestic abuse, Jane could not read or write and suffered from both learning difficulties and mental health conditions. Jane also suffered with several physical health problems causing her significant chronic pain and impacting her mobility.

Jane had no access to any benefits on presentation and had no contacts with any other services. She had no money and no access to food. Jane was provided with Temporary Accommodation while the Officer completed the investigation into her circumstances.

The investigation revealed that Jane had been married to a British National, however was unable to access public funds due to her immigration status now that she had fled her husband. Jane had also been forced to leave her child at home when she fled increasing her anxiety and trauma.

Both our Homelessness Officer and Domestic Abuse Officer referred Jane to multiple agencies (Citizens Advice, Immigration Support Charities, Doctors Surgeries, Mental Health Services and others). Due to Janes lack of reading and writing our officers became the point of contact for Jane and the multiple services assisting her.

During her time in temporary accommodation Jane was hospitalised due to her physical health and was also referred to Social Services and the Safeguarding Team due to suicidal ideation.

Due to our officers' hard work Jane was able to access the benefits she was entitled to, was signed up for a GP, received Mental Health support from the NHS and received food parcels from the Council whilst also being signposted to other food providers. None of which would have been possible without the work of the Housing Services Team.

Jane was originally placed in temporary accommodation in October 2023. Due to her multiple difficulties Jane was assessed as not being able to sustain her own general

needs tenancy and was finally placed in a supported housing placement in July 2024.

Jane had spent 38 weeks (nearly 9 months) in temporary accommodation.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion the rate of Homelessness has continued to increase and several national pressures (Covid, Cost of Living, PRS affordability and supply, planning slowdown) have all contributed to the rate of homelessness rising to its highest recorded level in Blaby District. The Housing Services Team continue to explore ways of countering these external pressures and working within Government guidelines to ease the burden on the residents of the district.

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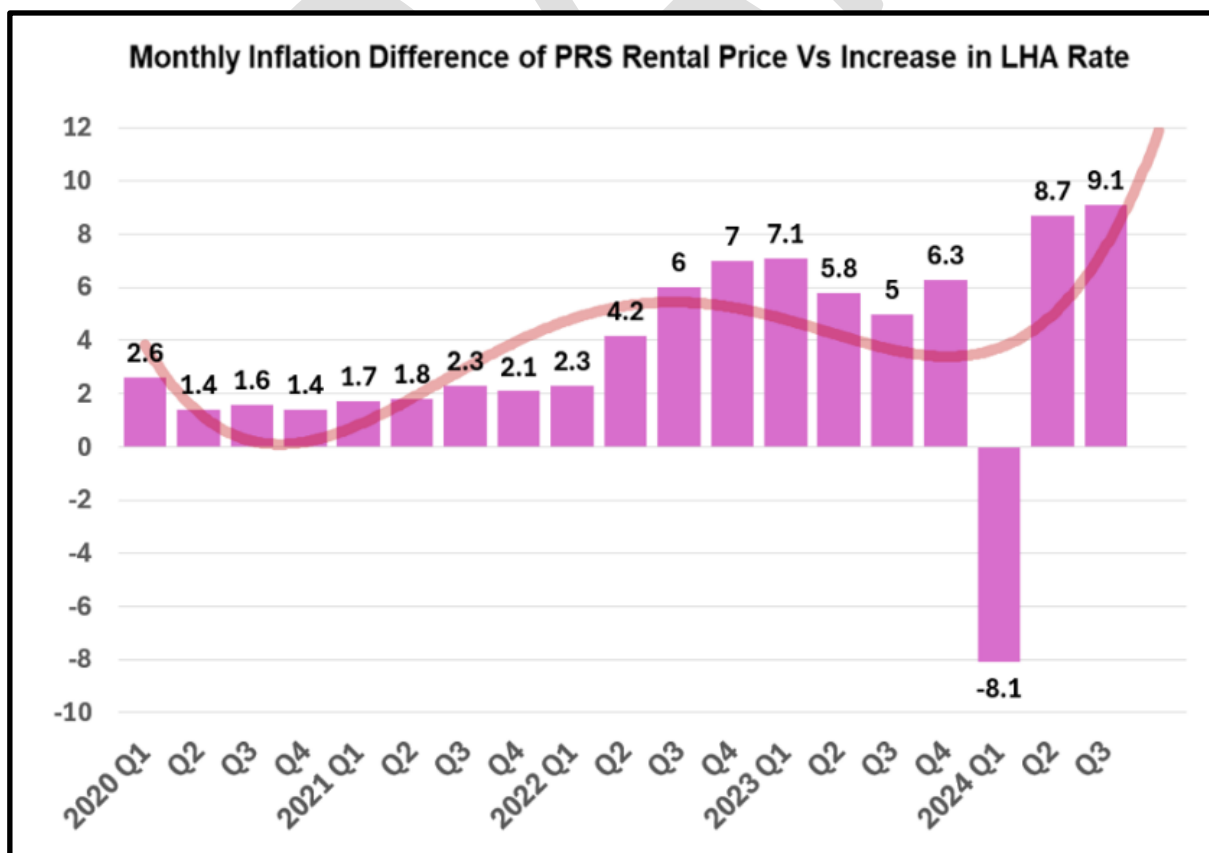
## Inaccessible Private Rented Sector (PRS)

Historically due to Blaby Districts smaller than average social housing stock (as detailed in the Housing Profile) the private rented sector has been a key resource to prevent and alleviate those facing homelessness. However, the volume of households accessing the PRS is decreasing and properties that are available, have become unaffordable for many of our residents.

### Affordability

Many of our homeless households rely on Universal Credit to contribute to their housing costs either partially (for those in employment) or as their sole income for rental payments (for those who receive the full entitlement). The value to the resident of these payments is governed by their household's bedroom requirements and the Local Housing Allowance award. This value is set on a regional basis by Central Government.

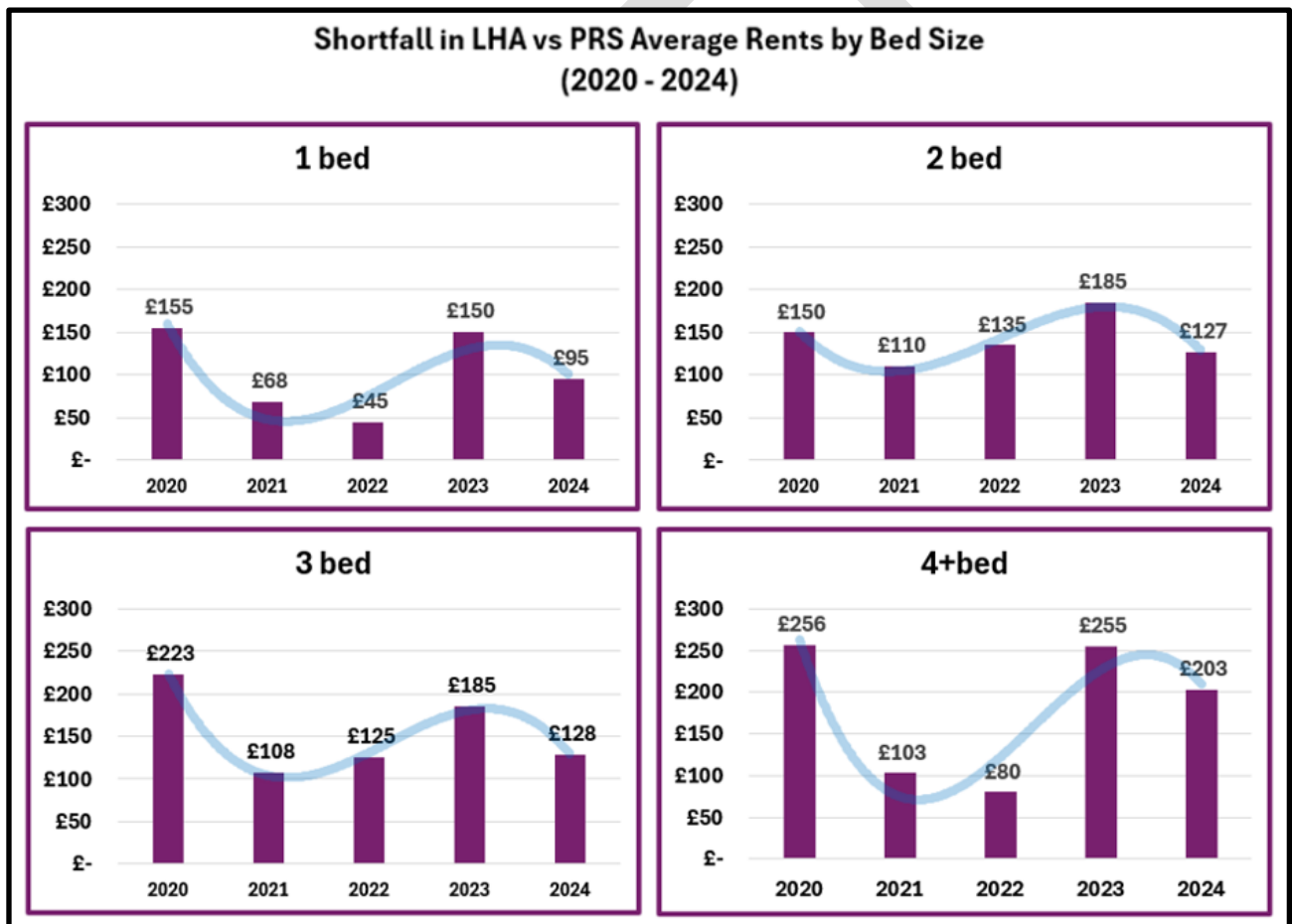
The LHA rate in Blaby is tied to the cost of private renting in Leicestershire as a whole. The figure is based on the lowest 30th percentile of available private rented costs within the region (incorporating several areas with a significantly lower rent levels) and has only been re-evaluated twice in the last four years. Once in April 2020 and once in April 2024. Over this period the below graph shows the inflationary increase in PRS rents offset with the increase in LHA rates.





The LHA uplift in April 2020 represented a 1% inflationary increase (against a 2.6% rise in that period in private rents). The increase in April 2024, while significant (a 16% inflationary rise against the previous rate) and having a positive impact, has already been offset in the first two quarters of PRS increases in the subsequent two quarters. The incoming government has already confirmed that the LHA rate will not be revisited for review until at least April 2026.

The result of the failure of the LHA rate to keep pace with PRS rental increases has led to significant shortfalls across house types for anyone wishing to rent a property privately. The shortfall represents the monthly cost difference between the Housing Benefit award and the average cost of a PRS property. The graphs below show the different level of shortfall a households would need to make up monthly on top of their Housing Benefit payment to meet the average cost of a Private rental property across each property type.

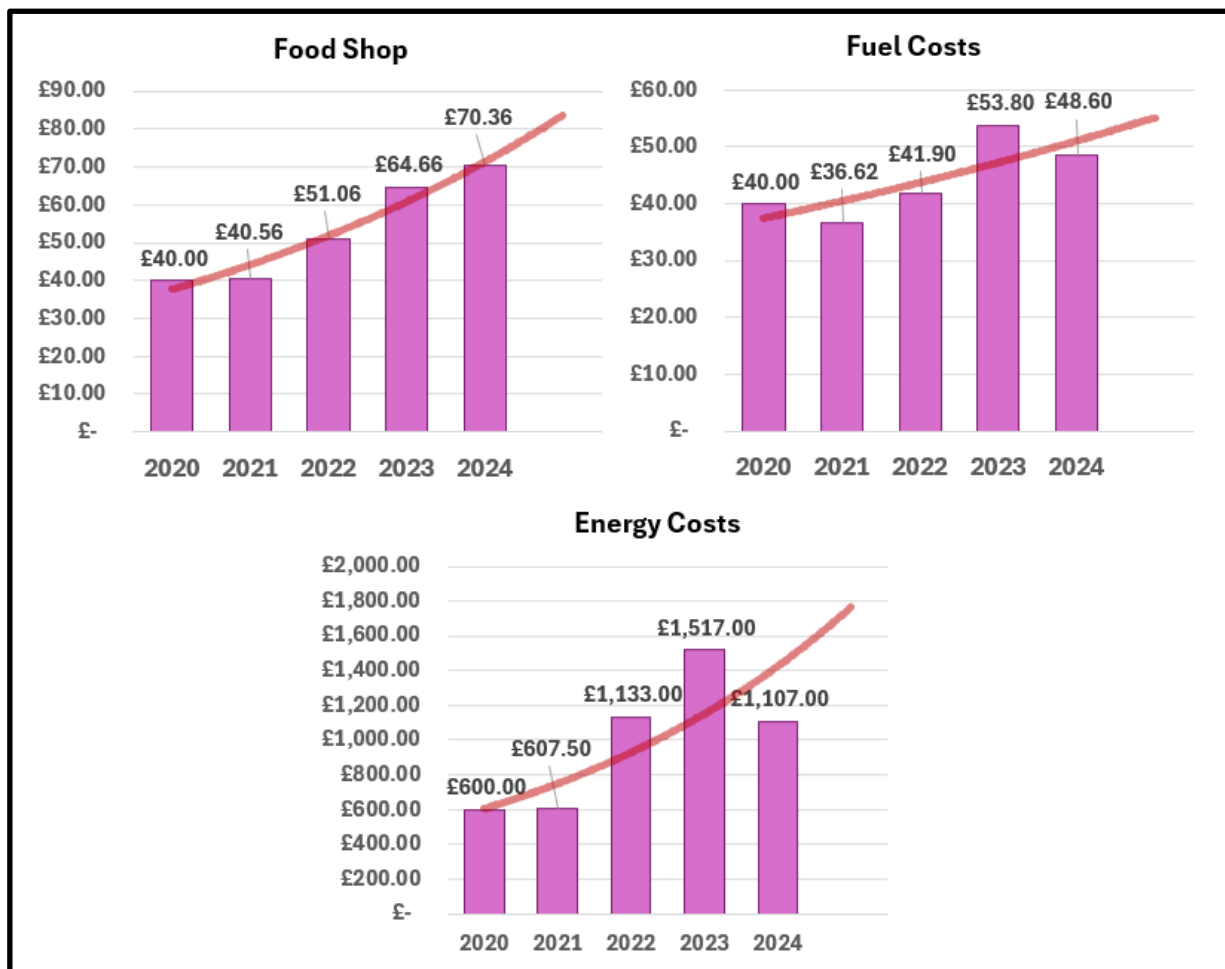


Whilst in the past it may have been possible for households to absorb the shortfall in LHA values, this is now increasingly difficult during the cost of living crisis.

### Food, Energy and Fuel

Inflationary pressures on other key areas of household spending (Food, Energy and Fuel) have meant households have very little spare income to offset the extra cost of

PRS housing. The below graphs show the inflationary increase in costs of the three main necessities since the first Quarter of 2020. The figures demonstrate whilst inflation is fluctuating, prices are significantly higher than at the start of 2020.



## Supply

Compounding the increasing unaffordability, the supply of private rental housing in the district remains low. Given the unpredictability of when PRS properties become available in a free market its difficult to demonstrate concrete statistics as to how many properties become ready to let over a defined period. However, we produce a series of snapshots of Private Rent availability when assessing housing need for planning applications. Below is a breakdown of these snapshots over the last 4 years. The data demonstrates the lack of provision open to those on our housing register.

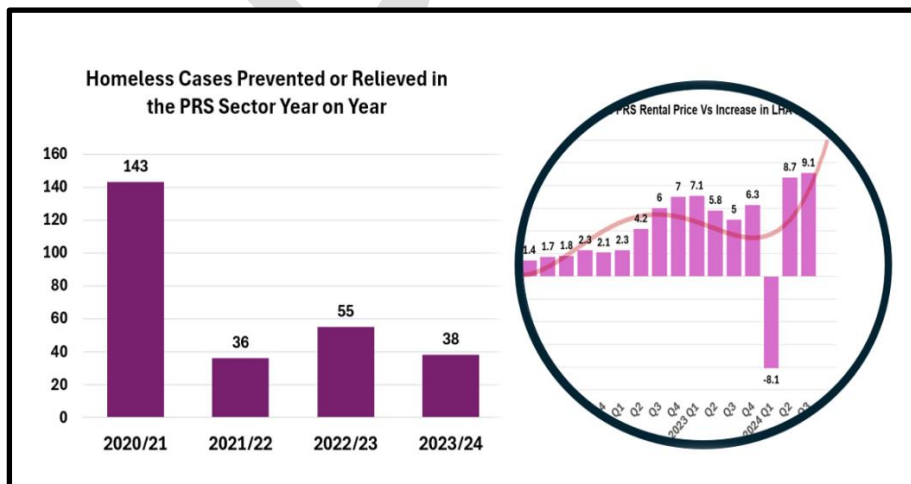
## Private Rented Availability Snapshot Statistics

Snapshot Date	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed	Bungalow	Total
Jun-24	5	9	13	12	1	40
Feb-24	8	6	12	10	3	39
May-23	5	16	10	6	5	42
Aug-22	11	11	23	7	1	53
Mar-22	6	9	6	3	2	26
Jun-21	4	8	11	13	1	37
Dec-20	9	17	22	6	2	56
Average	7	11	14	8	2	42

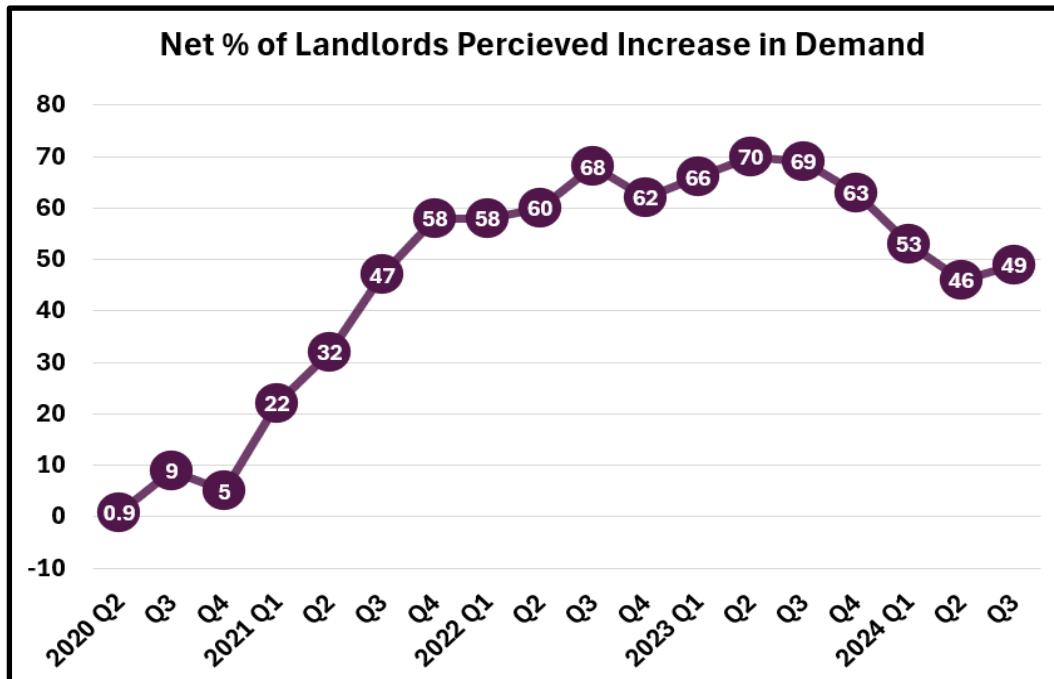
On average at any one time there are only 42 properties of varying sizes available to let, this is offset by the average number of applicants on our housing register of over 800 households seeking different accommodation. Both housing register applicants and Homeless households who have sought the help of the council are very likely to be lower earners.

The small supply of private rented homes means that landlords are in a position where they can increase rents and ensure that tenants have sufficient financial means (for example introducing earnings thresholds) to secure those higher rents without the danger of their properties lying vacant or rent arrears occurring.

As a result, the option for private renting is financially unviable for a large proportion of residents. This is borne out by the reduced number of households able to relieve their homelessness in the sector. The below comparison shows the sharp increase in rents and the subsequently reduced numbers of homeless households who secured PRS housing.



The percentage of Landlords who perceived that they were experiencing an increase in demand has also risen significantly since 2020 (below graph). Even though this is only a perceptive view it is likely to steer landlords to increase their rent levels as they feel there is capacity to do so without leaving properties unlet. This is also a negative factor for families on lower incomes in their ability to compete with other prospective tenants with more secure and higher incomes.



This perception of increase in demand could also indicate the effect of other landlords leaving the market and the provision of rental properties becoming more limited. The net result of this being that those landlords that do remain will have an ever growing list of applicants and can raise rents accordingly.

### **Anxiety in the Market, Legislative Change and Higher Interest Rates**

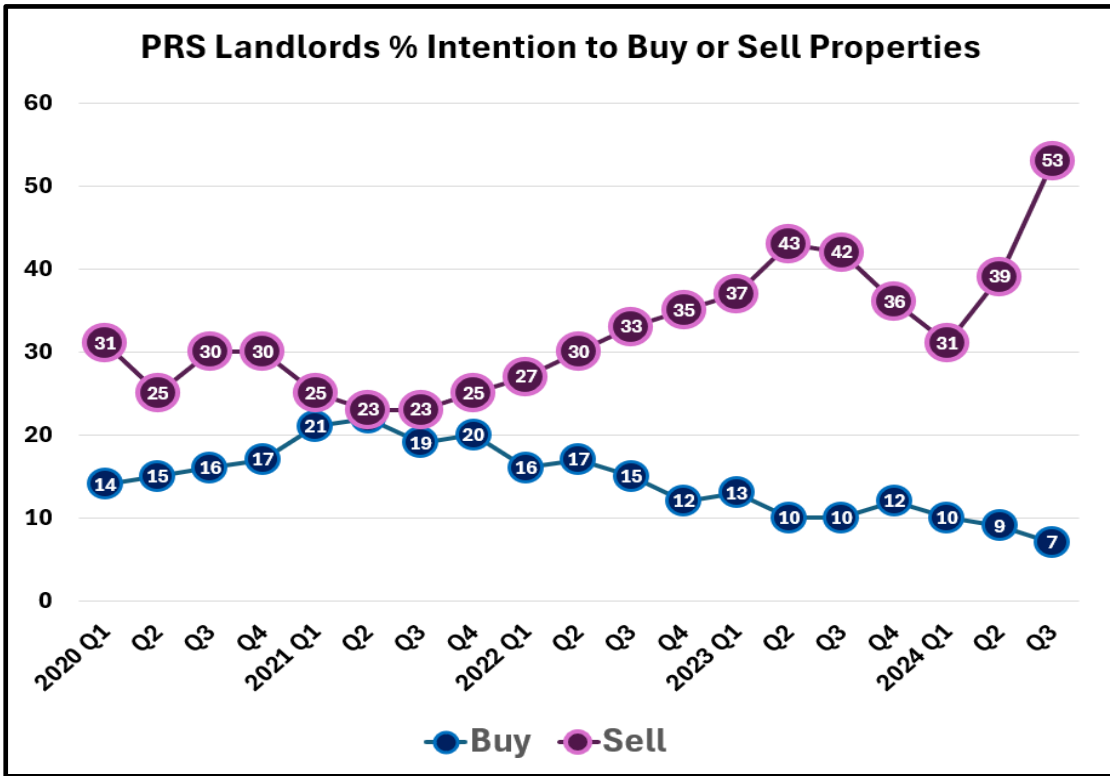
Landlords themselves are now actively looking to leave the sector due to several factors. Alongside tenants, landlords are also subject to the inflationary risks of the cost of living crisis, and many have also found mortgage rates have risen considerably over the last couple of years

The upcoming Renters Rights Bill has also contributed to unease in the sector. Whilst beneficial to current tenants with the introduction of the ban on Section 21 No Fault Evictions, Landlords are concerned that they will no longer have the flexibility that they once enjoyed.

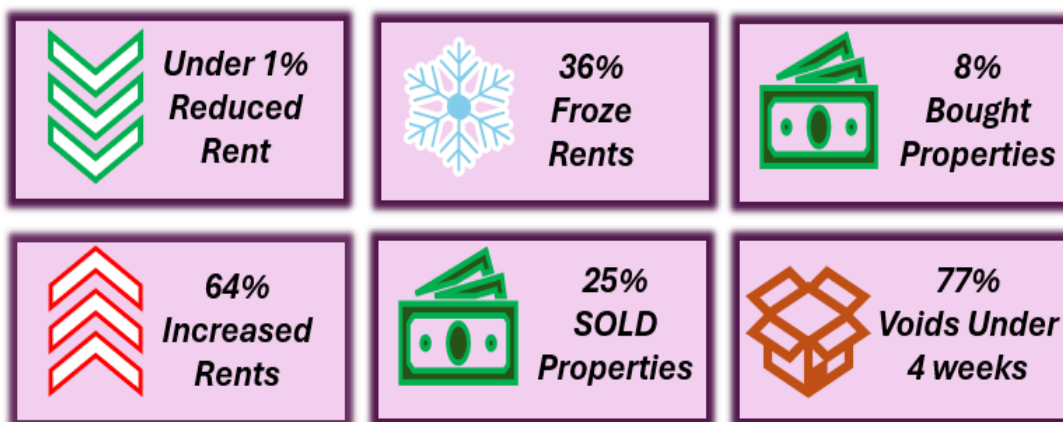
The National Residential Landlord Association (NRLA) conducts a quarterly survey of Landlords. The Landlords Confidence Index (LCI) for the months July to September 2024 confirms the impact of the above pressures.

- 71.6% of Landlords having less confidence in the sector

- Only 0.6% feeling more confident
- An Overall Confidence score of 24.5% represents an all-time low, lower even than at the onset of Covid-19
- Numbers of landlords looking to increase their portfolios has hit an all-time low
- Landlords looking to sell is at its highest level for at least six years

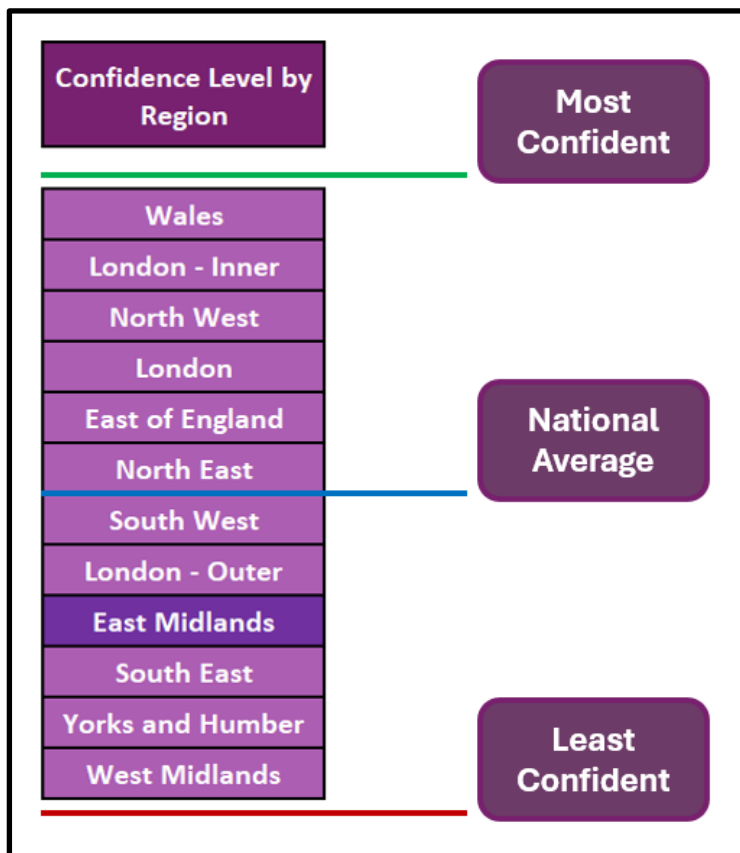


When considering the above graph, the intentions of Landlords seems to be an uncertain measure and whether they will continue to lack confidence may change, however it suggests that there is a reluctance to embrace new legislation designed to protect tenants.

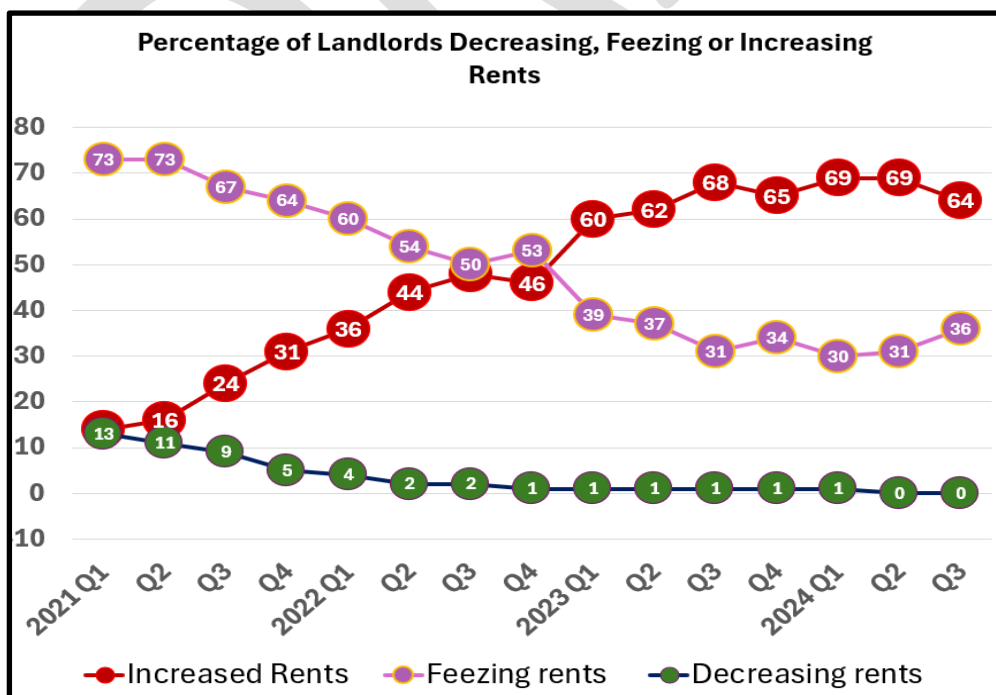


Further key findings from the report covering the last 12 Months include the below statistics:

Although the survey is a national one covering all of England and Wales, a table is produced to show a breakdown of confidence levels by region. The East Midlands is the 4<sup>th</sup> least confident region in the UK.



Much of the above data can be seen manifesting itself in the increasing number of landlords who are routinely increasing their rents.



The graph above shows that in just the last three years the percentage of landlords increasing rents rose from 21% in 2021 to now 67% in the first three quarters of 2024. Freezing rents has also reduced dramatically from 69% in 2021 to now only 32% in 2024. Landlords who lowered their rent levels, already a rare event at 13% in 2021 has dropped to no landlords at all indicating they will lower their rent levels, this is despite the dramatic increase in rents since emerging from the pandemic and the cost of living pressure facing their tenants.

Lastly, and which is apparent from the findings, the sector is experiencing significant turmoil. The NRLA state that their findings that 25% of landlords have sold properties (rather than indicating they are looking to sell) is a record high and note that this figure doesn't include landlords who have sold their entire portfolio and who now no longer fill out the survey. As a result, they conclude that the number of landlords selling is likely to be higher. This would ensure that the other trends of increasing rent and lack of new provision will continue into 2025.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion the turmoil in the Private Rented Sector through lack of supply, unaffordability and lack of confidence increasing over the time-period of the last Homelessness Strategy has resulted in a significant challenge for the Council in its attempts to access the market for vulnerable residents to relieve homelessness.

## Affordable Housing Delivery

Alongside the PRS sector the only other route to a secure home for our homeless residents, should they lose their current home, is Social Housing. All social housing is delivered via Registered Providers and is made up of existing stock and new build delivery.

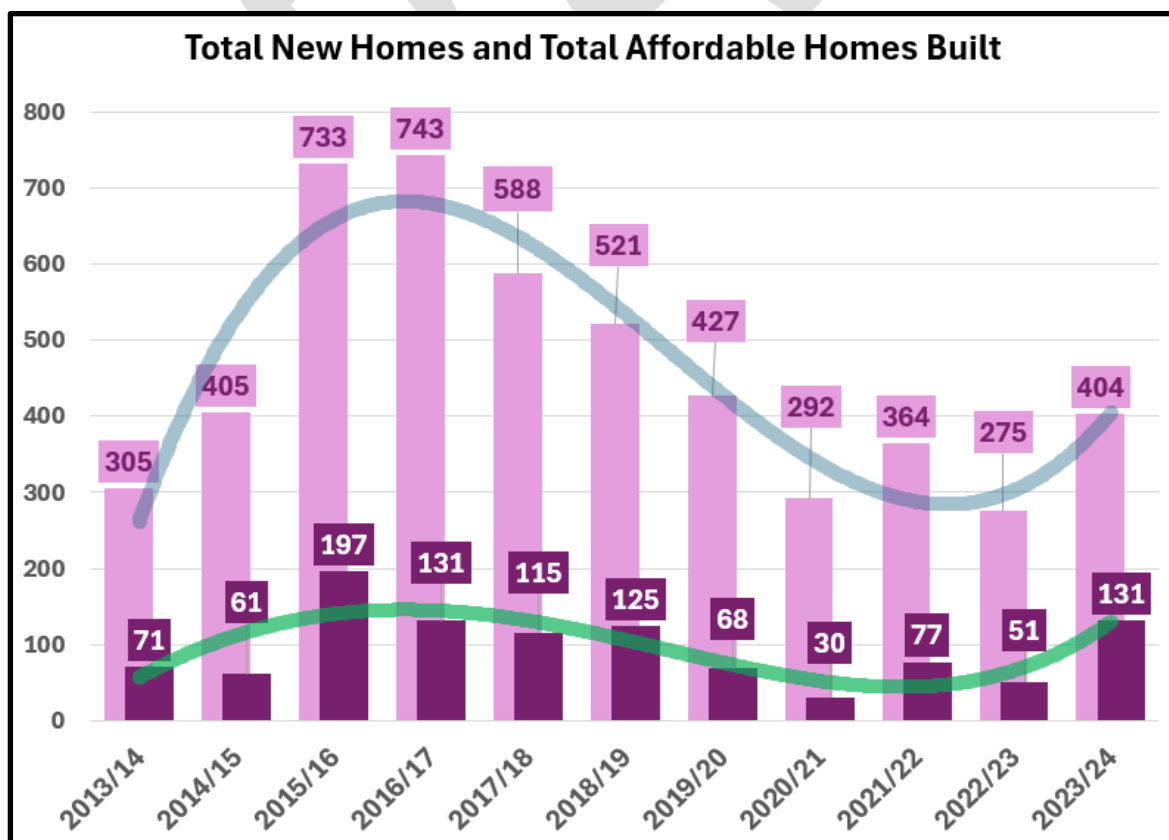
A key priority for the Housing Services Team and the Council is to maximise the increase of new affordable housing. As the Council is a non-general needs stock holding or house building authority this is achieved through the planning process and close partnership work with both Market Housing Developers and Registered Providers of Social Housing.

The latest research contained within the Housing and Economic Needs Survey (HENA) indicates that Blaby District Council would need to provide an additional 536 new Affordable Properties each year (from 2021 to 2039) to meet the unmet housing need for the district.

### Current and New Delivery Review

The previous four years have proved to be difficult in terms of new affordable housing. Multiple factors have been significant in a smaller than average number of new affordable dwellings being completed.

Below is a graph showing the numbers of affordable housing units delivered over the last ten years per financial year in comparison to the total number of homes delivered.





## Market Delivery

The key relationship between the provision of market housing and the provision of Affordable housing is clear. Given the Councils position of requiring any scheme of 15 or more units providing 25% of those units as affordable homes (20% on our Sustainable Urban Extension - New Lubbethorpe), a lack of private sector delivery has a big impact on our ability to provide new affordable homes. Simply put we are beholden to Developers to build in Blaby if we want to increase affordable housing in any significant number.

Focusing on the last four years we can see the slowdown of market delivery has significantly reduced the provision of new affordable housing units. Several factors have contributed to this decline, including notably

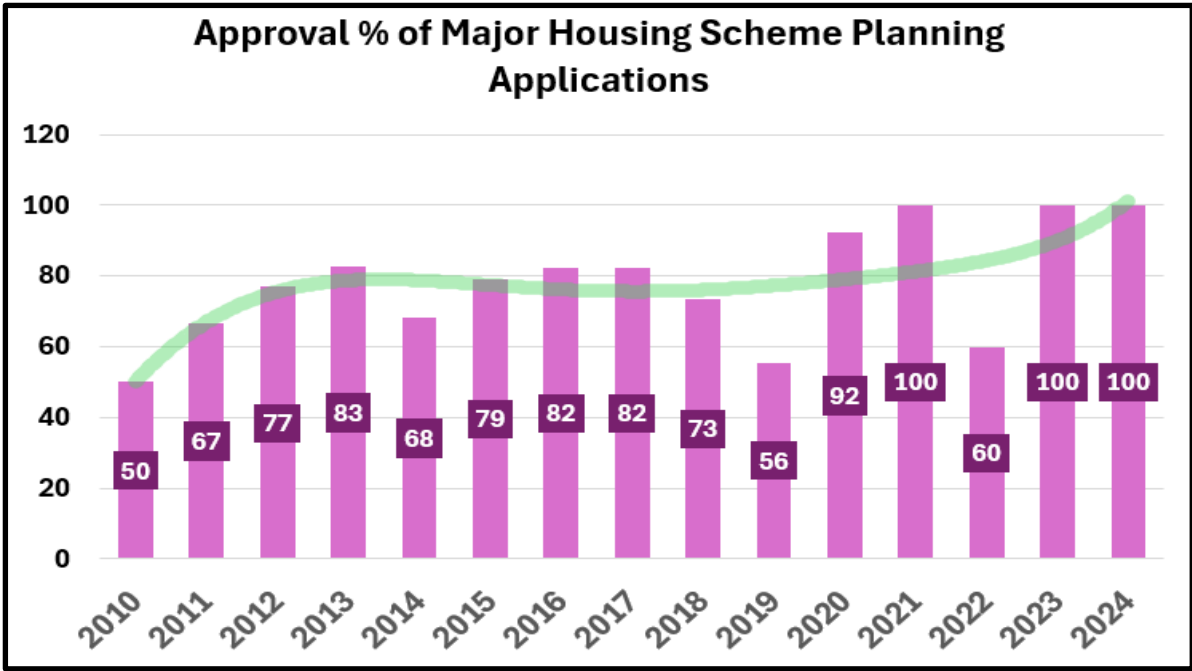


- Covid 19
- Inflation in the building industry
- Land Availability
- Workforce decline
- Materials Cost

## Factors within our Control

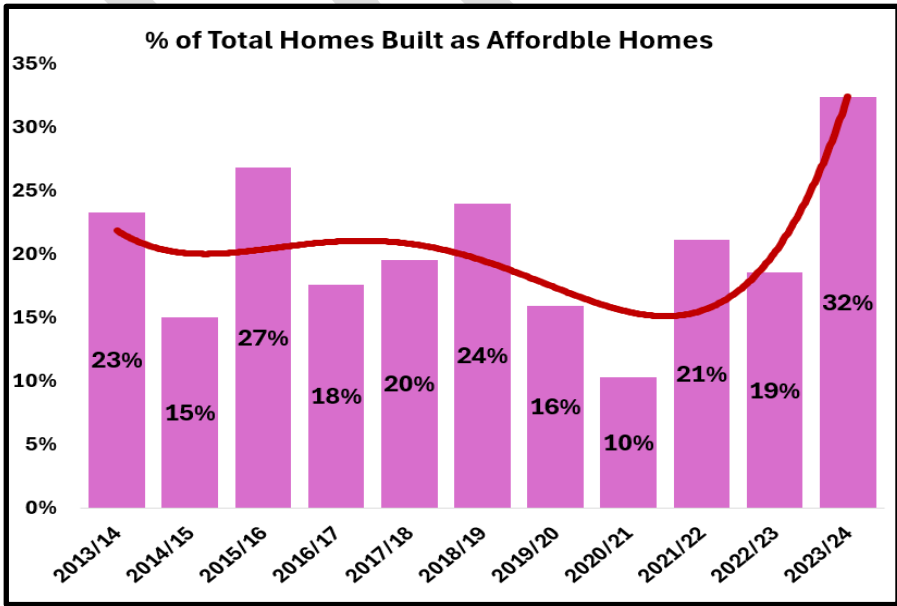
All major Housing Development planning applications must pass through the Development Control Team to make sure they are policy compliant and meet the objectives of Blaby District Council. Planning and Housing Strategy Officers work hard with developers to prepare all applications so that when presented to Planning Committee only those that are right for Blaby are approved and allowed to proceed.

As a Council we have a good record of approving applications based on their merits. Our approval rates for Major Developments is shown in the below graph.



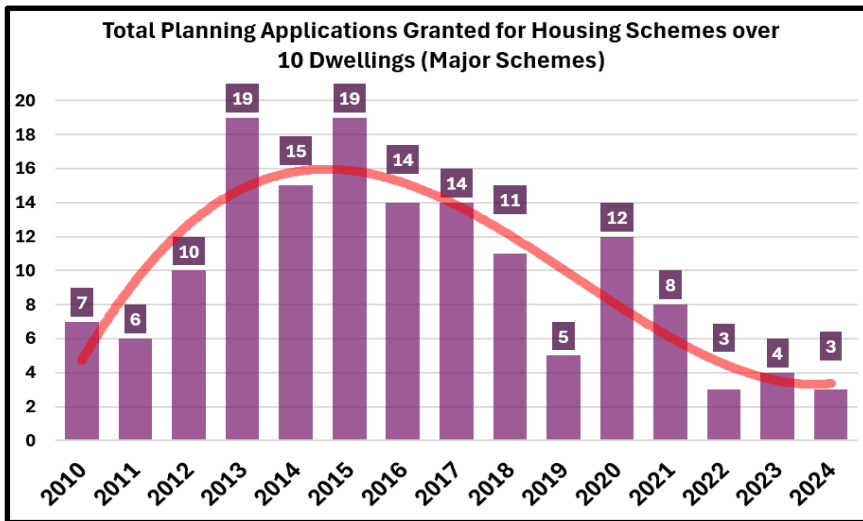
As the results show, we approve a high percentage of schemes for new housing, recognising the need to increase our housing delivery. Indeed, in the period of the last Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025 we have approved 90% of all major housing applications.

Of those schemes approved, 100% have been policy compliant in the number of affordable homes they have provided (25% affordable dwellings on schemes over 15 units). The below graph shows the number of affordable homes completed as a percentage of total dwellings completed, with 2023/24 showing the highest affordable housing percentage of delivery in the last decade. However, this was mainly due to two all affordable developments coming forwards at the same time, for various reasons including the pandemic, these schemes had previously been delayed



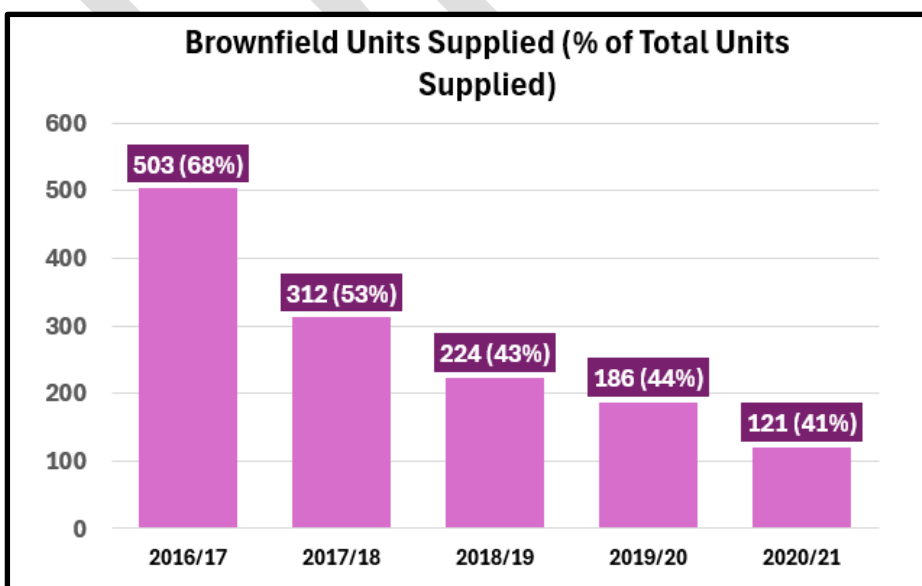
## Factors Out of Our Control

However, when we consider the number of planning applications that have been presented by developers to the Council the issues we face become clearer.



Since a high point in 2015, applications from developers (2015 -2024) for new major housing sites in our district have dropped dramatically (above graph). Consequently, the opportunities to utilise the major schemes for affordable housing delivery have also dropped.

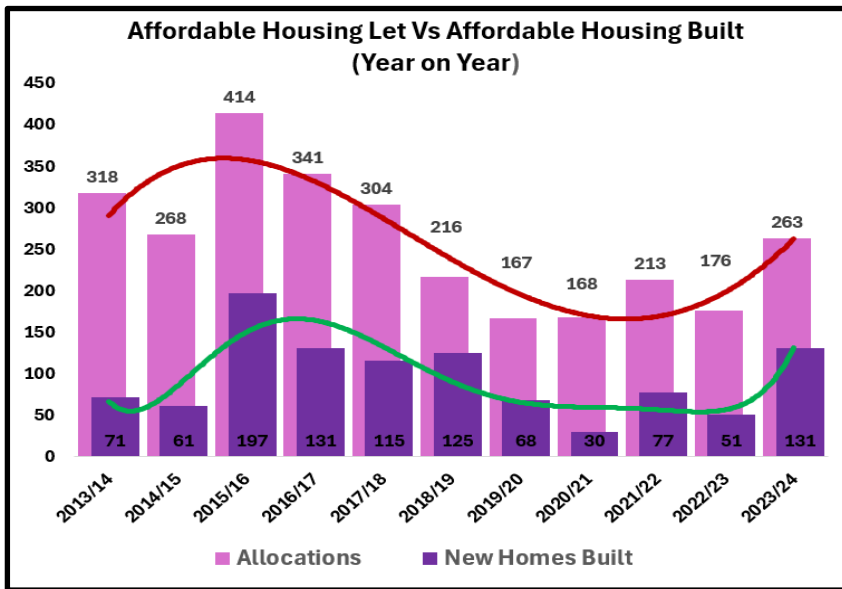
Another of the key restrictive factors in the last four years is the lack of Brownfield Land in the district. Brownfield land is defined as land that has previously been developed (not green or open space) and is suitable for new housing. As of 2021 Blaby District had only 3 sites identified as having the potential to deliver housing of more than 15 units (and thus providing affordable units). Previously Brownfield land has made a significant contribution to overall (and subsequently also affordable) housing delivery as shown below.



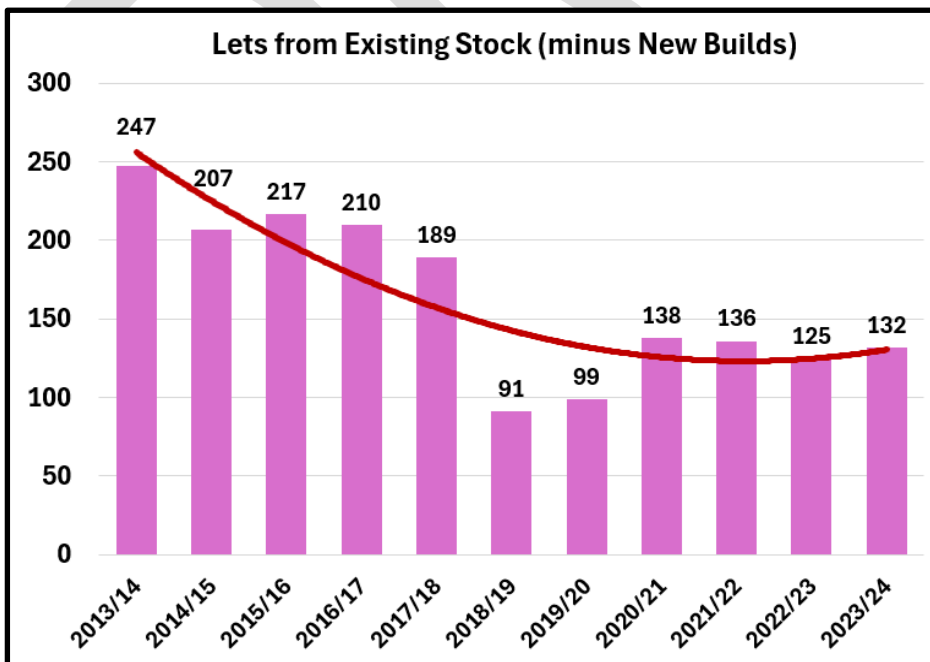
## Existing Supply

The lack of New Affordable housing is having a big impact on our ability to provide housing for the homeless residents in our District. The other key resource we rely on is the turnover of existing stock becoming available as people move on from social housing.

The below graph shows the direct correlating trend between new housing built and the increase in lets we can offer our residents.



Furthermore, the average number of lets coming from the existing stock has dropped over time. Between 2013/14 to 2018/19 we advertised an average of 194 new lets from existing housing stock. This number has now dropped to an average of 126 per year between 2019/20 to today.

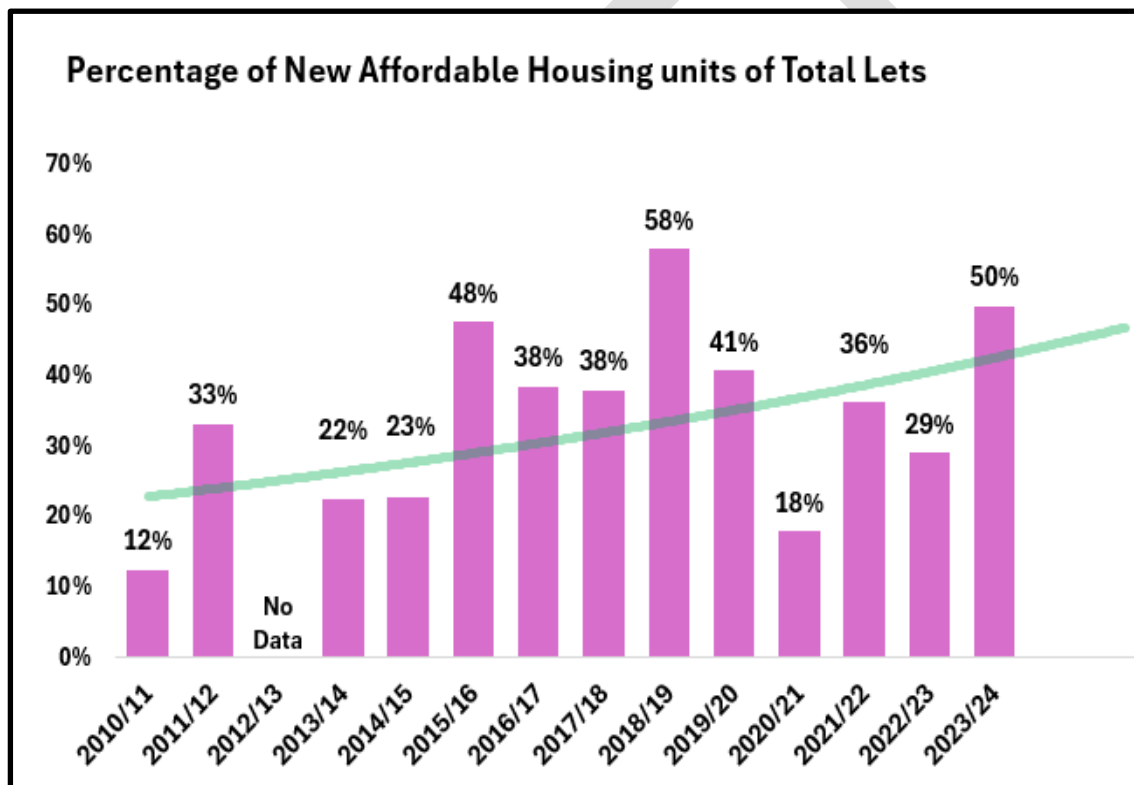


Potential reasons for this decline in existing lets is the increased work both we and the Registered Providers are doing in preventing households losing social housing tenancies. Whilst this is very important preventative work this does have the unintended knock on effect of reducing turnover.

The collapse of the affordability of the PRS could also be contributing to those households who may have in the past moved from social housing to the PRS, therefore freeing up new lets in the Social Rented Sector, unfortunately we no longer have that option.

Also contributing to the lack of movement in the existing social housing stock is the reliance on new build affordable housing to supplement the total number of lets.

Over the last 15 years the percentage of new build housing of the total lets per year has been (although erratic and dependent on yearly provision) increasingly important in housing those in the greatest need (Below Graph).



## Conclusion

New Affordable Housing delivery is becoming more and more central in our capabilities to address homelessness in Blaby. With the contraction of the Private Rented Sector limiting a significant tool for homelessness prevention, the council will need to prioritise affordable housing delivery wherever opportunities present themselves. Despite difficulties in the availability of land, high inflation and rising materials costs we will still need to ensure that the housing that is built is suitable to meet the needs of the district by working closely to communicate those needs with developers through the planning process.

## Key Priority Performance Review 2020 – 2025

The last Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy identified our vision and four key priority areas for the Council to focus on to look at ways of improving our offer to those residents experiencing or at risk of Homelessness. Our vision and key priorities were ...

### Vision

Prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping in Blaby by working in partnerships to meet the housing and broader needs of those at risk of, or who are already homeless.

### Key Priorities

- **Priority 1:** Preventing homelessness and reducing the use of temporary accommodation
- **Priority 2:** Increasing the supply of affordable housing
- **Priority 3:** Developing partnership work and wider communications to ensure sufficient user led provision
- **Priority 4:** Supporting vulnerable households to be independent and self-reliant

Below is a list of the Councils Key achievements and the key priorities they relate to.

### Homelessness Prevented or Relieved

Between 2020/21 and 2023/24 the Housing Services Team have successfully prevented or relieved 1131 Households from the threat of, or experience of, homelessness. On average 280 households per year have been removed from this threat with 2023/2024 seeing the highest number (311 Households). This is testament to, most importantly, the hard work of the Homelessness Team in very challenging circumstances but also the extra provision of new build affordable housing in 2023/24

The number of ways this has been achieved includes

- working with residents to stabilise their finances via accessing correct benefit entitlements
- negotiating with Registered Providers to suspend tenancy arrears court action
- negotiation with family to resolve issues leading to breakdowns in living arrangements
- negotiating with Private Landlords to repair broken relationships with tenants through either arrears issues or repairs and again accessing the right financial support people are entitled to
- accessing new private rental accommodation (usually involving officers supporting residents to prepare for a move to another local authority area which often includes upheaval to their lives (for example moving schools for their children and changing travel routines for school and work changing routines)

- Ensuring that vulnerable residents receive the right medical or social care support so that they can manage an existing tenancy that may be at risk though anti-social behaviour
- Finally, managing expectations of residents as to where they may be able to move to so that they can access social housing in a wide as possible area

All of these resolutions involve significant work on behalf of the Homelessness Case Officers, whether that be liaising with multiple outside agencies (Social Care, Probation, DWP, the NHS among others) or whether that is leading and supporting residents through a process that is at best very stressful and at worst incredibly traumatic for them to face.

Alongside the work of our Homelessness Case Officers our Tenancy Sustainment Officer has worked with over 500 households over the period of the strategy. This work includes extensive partnership work Registered Provider partners proactively developer by our Officer to identify residents who are at risk of eviction for rent arrears.

This work is vital in preventing those residents from needing more extensive homelessness assistance from our Homelessness Case Officers in the future and includes court appearances supporting residents in arranging acceptable payment plans to pay of rent arrears, filling out complicated benefits forms and signposting to other relevant agencies. Our Tenancy Sustainment Officer currently has an average case load of 30 open cases at any one time, an increase from the first two years of the previous Homelessness Strategy.

Our Triage Team have responded to 4774 initial approaches. Despite the fact that not all these approaches have proved to be homelessness cases, the Triage Team play a vital role in signposting those who have approached in a time of crisis but don't need direct homelessness prevention support, to the relevant support services more suited to their needs. The triage team also effectively manage the Housing Register Applications with an average of 800 active applicants at any one time on the register.

### **Priorities Met: 1, 3, and 4**

#### **Domestic Abuse Link Worker Freedom Programme and Case Work**

In response to the increasing number of Domestic Abuse cases the Housing Services Team were able to partly utilise UKSPF funding to commission a Domestic Abuse Link Worker to embed within the team. This has enabled all DA cases that come through to the Homelessness Team to be offered dedicated and specialised DA support quickly.

On average our Link Worker has a case load of 31 open cases and receives an average of 19 new referrals per quarter and is a vital component of the team allowing for prompt support for those in need.

As well as direct one on one support with residents, our LW works in conjunction with an equivalent officer from Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council to deliver a

collaborative group learning programme for survivors of, or those currently experiencing, domestic abuse.

The Freedom Programme is a 12 week course open to all self-identifying women, queer and nonbinary people (anyone that is not a self-identifying man) with the following aims

- To help women understand the beliefs held by abusive men and in doing so, recognize which of these beliefs they have shared
- To illustrate the effects of domestic abuse on children
- To assist women to recognize potential future abusers
- To help women gain self-esteem and the confidence to improve the quality of their lives
- To introduce women to other women who share similar experiences.

The programme represents a progressive and proactive approach to empowering women to break the cycle of recurring domestic abuse. The group also provides a safe space for women to meet other survivors and counteract the feeling of isolation that many of those surviving Domestic Abuse feel or are made to feel by abusive perpetrators.

Over the course of the last four years the Link worker has become a critical part of the Housing Services Team and whilst "success" is difficult to quantify within such a qualitative process the below quote from a service user is a good measure of the importance of the role.

Anon

"I don't know what I would have done without the support over the last 12 months, this has truly been lifesaving"

### **Priorities Met: 1, 3, and 4**

#### **Affordable Housing Provision**

Over the lifetime of the previous Homelessness Strategy, despite a period of slow housing growth the Council has facilitated the addition of 357 new Affordable Homes in the district with the majority (131) coming in the year 2023/24, after a period of low numbers significantly impacted by the Covid pandemic.

However, within those units we have made some significant steps forward in the provision of suitable affordable housing for vulnerable groups. This provision includes temporary housing projects, longer term supported housing placements, Housing First units for rough sleepers in addition to general needs long term secure social housing properties.



## Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) Supported Council Owned Temporary Accommodation.



Since selling the districts housing stock in 2008 under Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT), the district has not directly owned any social housing properties. With the rapid increase in financing the cost of temporary accommodation it became apparent that the purchase of properties to use for this reason was becoming more financially prudent.

LAHF Round One was introduced in December 2022 for local authorities to bid for the funds to provide suitable housing in response to the emerging needs for resettlement of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees (due respectively to the re-emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia).

As a District we have met our pledge to house these groups through other means, however the fund was expanded in March 2023 (LAHF Round 2) to include the eligibility for Local Authorities to bid to fund more sustainable and suitable Temporary Accommodation for all Homeless Households.

As our need for this type of accommodation was evident we submitted a bid for an initial allocation of funds to contribute 40% of the value for purchasing 11 properties. The bid was successful, and we were able to stretch the grant further and purchase an additional 5 properties taking the total to 16.

With the Council able to match fund the allocation we were able to purchase 12 one and two bedroom flats and 3 two bedroom houses. The additional property is in the process of being purchased at the time of writing this strategy.

A significant amount of work across the council was required to set up the properties from a maintenance and management perspective and fully furnishing each unit involving the Housing Services Team, the Property and Assets Team, Health and Safety Officers and Senior Leadership oversight . This work included incorporating additional property management responsibility to a revised post, Housing Accommodation and Enablement Officer, replacing the existing Housing Strategy Officer and the creation of a new post, a Housing Services Team Assistant to help with property administration.

The properties are now occupied by homeless families who would otherwise be in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

### Henson House, Whetstone



Henson House and Frost Court represent the first two dedicated supported housing developments built in Blaby District for many years. By working closely with the Housing Associations involved and by providing a financial contribution, we have managed to secure nomination rights to both schemes.

Henson House is a block of 11 One Bedroom self-contained flats and forms part of a larger All-Affordable scheme in Whetstone providing accommodation for single adults with Learning Difficulties, mental health difficulties or who are at risk of homelessness and requiring temporary accommodation.

Working in partnership with Emh Homes' development and care teams the project has been in progress since 2021 and opened its doors to residents in July 2024. The project involved a significant amount of planning and collaboration between

initially the Councils Development Control Team, the Housing Services Team and Emh's development and land purchase teams. Once the initial plans were approved the work shifted to collaboration between the Housing Services Team and Emh's Accommodation Care and Support Team to ensure the accommodation was fit for purpose and provided the level of care for Residents that the Council required.

The resulting scheme provides residents who meet the criteria with a self-contained home with onsite dedicated housing and employment support and 24 hour staff availability with the aim of supporting residents to maintain a tenancy and eventually move on to a secure permanent home.

The development was supported financially by Blaby District Council utilising both ring fenced Homelessness Support funding from central government and commuted sums awarded to the council via Market Developers who were unable to provide the required percentage of social housing on market housing led developments.

### **Frost Court, Blaby**



Frost Court Blaby is a standalone Mental Health Supported Unit providing 14 self-contained one bedroom flats with residents who require mental health support and help in maintaining tenancies.

The project has been the result of extensive partnership work between Norton Housing (a Mental Health Care Accommodation charity based in Leicester), Blaby District Councils Housing Services and Development Control Teams alongside

Nottingham Community Housing Association (NCHA) as the development partner for Norton.

Despite suffering several setbacks (outside the control of development partners) during the build process the scheme has now opened its doors to residents and is providing a much needed service as one of only a handful of residential units that provides dedicated Mental Health Supported Accommodation in the district.

The aim of Frost Court is to allow residents who are currently unable to maintain a general needs tenancy to build up the necessary skills to move on to secure long term housing with the support of staff at the unit.

The development was also supported financially by utilising commuted sums awarded to the council via Market Developers who were unable to provide the required percentage of social housing on market housing led sites.

### **Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programmes (RSAP)**

In partnership with Emh Homes, Blaby District Council led on two County wide funding bids to provide Housing First properties for rough sleepers and those at risk of Rough Sleeping. Housing First is an initiative to provide rough sleepers with accommodation first and to then subsequently provide wraparound social care, mental and physical health care and support. This includes employment support and maximising benefit entitlements once they have a settled address.

The RSI scheme provided both a Homeless Outreach service and the provision of 6 existing affordable housing units to be converted into Housing First properties across the County. Blaby District Council secured one property via Emh homes during the funding round.

The RSAP funding was designed to purchase new properties from the private sector. Again, the Housing Service Team led a county wide bid in conjunction with Emh homes. We sourced the properties for Emh to purchase and refurbish ready for occupation and management. Via this route we secured an additional 2 properties in the district to house Rough Sleepers.

Finally, we have also added a further lease property from Emh to assist with our temporary accommodation needs bringing that number up to four units.

### **Priorities Met: 1, 2, 3, and 4**

#### **Wider Blaby District Council Work in Homeless Prevention**

##### **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP): Council Tax and Benefits Team**

Discretionary Housing Payments, funded by Central government and directly administered and awarded by the Council Tax and Benefits team play a vital role in maintaining existing tenancies where they have become unaffordable and allowing

homeless households to move to new tenancies affording a period of leeway for new tenants to put in place measures to afford properties in the long term.

Over the lifetime of the previous Homelessness Strategy, we have awarded the following funds (2020/2021 figure is low due to the Covid 19 Pandemic meaning households had less expenditure and PRS evictions were suspended)

2020/2021 - £67830.12	52.33% of allocation
2021/2022 - £71524.23	80.39% of allocation
2022/2023 - £61889.54	98.14% of allocation
2023/2024 - £59060.86	93.66% of allocation

For the financial year 2024/2025, 54.4% of the budget was awarded in the first six months of the financial year. This indicates we are likely to spend 100% of the budget this year.

## **Priorities Met: 1, 2, and 4**

### **Lightbulb**

Blaby District Council also carries out a significant amount of work with residents to remove the threat of a future homelessness risk.

This work includes that of the Lightbulb Team. The Lightbulb Team is a multi-disciplinary service led by Blaby District Council offering a range of options for residents across the County who are either unable to leave hospital due to having no access to suitable accommodation or struggling to live in their current homes due to medical difficulties.

Between 2021 and 2024, 248 Households in Blaby were supported via financial grant assistance to maintain their current home or to access new housing from hospital. This includes 202 households who received Disabled Facilities Grants to provide major adaptations to their homes following medical need changes, 36 grants to provide minor adaptations to their homes and 10 Hospital Discharge grants to either equip a current home with necessary furnishings and white goods for residents to safely occupy current accommodation or to access new housing.

Between February 2023 and October 2024, the Hospital Enablement Team (HET) has worked with 148 individuals who are deemed to be ready for discharge but unable to access secure housing. Whilst some of these individuals will be passed on to the Homelessness service, the HET team will also access private rental accommodation, provide furniture and white goods or negotiate with family to resolve the discharge issues.

All of this work is vital to prevent these households from needing the services of the Homelessness Team. Again, this work involves significant collaboration with other agencies most notably Adult and Children's Social Care and the National Health Service (including direct embedded collaboration with the NHS and the Housing Enablement Team when dealing with delayed Hospital Discharges).

## **Priorities Met: 1, 3, and 4**

### **Community Services Team**

#### **Resident Support Team**

Blaby District Council Resident Support team will support residents with a wide range of issues including:

- Support to prevent the risk of homelessness
- Maximising income (such as claiming benefits)
- Addressing housing arrears
- Budgeting and debt Management
- Support setting up rent and utility payments
- Registering with health services (such as a GP surgery or dentist)
- Independent living skills
- Applying for grants and funding
- Setting up a new home
- Signpost to other services and making referrals on their behalf

The Resident Support Team have supported 1330 individuals and families with a variety of the above issues between 2020 and 2024. Whilst many of these cases will have been referred by the Housing Services Team, many others won't, and the work is important to prevent households from reaching a point of losing or being at risk of losing their home.

#### **Anti-Social Behaviour Team**

Since 2020 the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team have been involved with 1062 cases of ASB in Blaby District. These cases range from low level anti-social behaviour, for example cannabis smoking affecting neighbours, to high level cases that have led to Closure Orders on properties. Whilst again not all cases would result in homelessness for either the victim or the perpetrator, this work makes an important contribution in preventing situations escalating to a point where residents will feel they are not safe in their homes and need to move and potentially becoming homeless as a result.

#### **Domestic Abuse Services**

The Community Services dedicated Domestic Abuse work has currently aided 56 Residents in the year 2024. This work includes making victims of domestic abuse safe within their current homes. Prevention work includes providing CCTV cameras, special locks or providing escalation plans if they are needed to allow residents to feel safe. Again, this work is crucial for residents to remain settled rather than seeking the assistance of the Homelessness Team to move.

## **Priorities Met: 1, 3, and 4**

## **Partnership Working**

As part of our continued efforts to create partnerships and maintain improved homelessness prevention pathways for vulnerable groups we have contributed to, and signed up to, several new protocols in the last four years.

**Leicestershire Care Leavers Protocol** - Close collaboration work with Children's Social Care and other Leicestershire District Councils to improve the experiences of care leavers and their interactions with Homelessness Services, whilst updating good practices from both Local Authorities and Social Care services.

**16/17 Year Old Protocol** – Joint protocol designed to establish the roles and responsibilities of different agencies towards homeless and or potentially homeless 16- and 17-year-olds to achieve the best outcomes for the young person. Agencies involved in the protocol include Leicestershire County Council, Children and Family Services and all Local Authorities.

**Prison Release and Ex-Offender Pathway Protocol** – Multi Agency Protocol to again define key roles of each agency involved in an effective response to the prevention of homelessness for newly released offenders or existing ex offender. Agencies involved in the Protocol are all Homelessness Teams from Local Authorities in Leicester and Leicestershire (including neighbouring Rutland), the Probation Service and the Charity Sector Help the Homeless, Turning Point, The Bridge Homelessness to Hope, and The Bridge (East Midlands).

**Emerging County Domestic Abuse Protocol** – Although not finalised or published we are a key partner involved in the development of a new Domestic Abuse Protocol. Because of the nature of Domestic Abuse and the need for survivors to often move across Local Authority boundaries, the key aim of the protocol is to align all Local Authorities in Leicestershire in one way of working with survivors to remove barriers to homelessness prevention and relief for this vulnerable group.

## **Priorities Met: 1, 3, and 4**

### **Partnership Work with Third Sector Organisations**

#### **Beam**

Beam are an organisation specialising in employment and housing support for residents referred to them by Local Authorities. Using UKSPF (Levelling up) funding the Housing Services Team employed Beam on a two year contract in 2022 to support our homeless households. Currently Beam have supported 26 residents with employment and housing support.

#### **The Falcon Centre**

The Falcon Centre is one of the few homeless hostels for non-priority need residents in the County. We work closely with the centre to refer clients who would not otherwise be owed a temporary accommodation duty.

#### **Turning Point**

As a dedicated Drug and Alcohol support service Turning Point are one of our key partners when dealing with complex residents with substance abuse issues. As is clear in the above case study, Turning Point offer a crucial service in the County and regularly attend multi agency meetings with the council and other Public Bodies

### **Lawrence House / Durban House**

Lawrence House and Durban House are the only two homeless shelters dedicated to young people. Lawrence House being for 18-25 and Durban House 18 – 26 year olds.

### **The Bridge - Rough Sleeper Initiative**

Whenever there are reports from the public that we have a potential rough sleeper in Blaby those cases are referred to the RSI Team. They will visit the rough sleeper in situ and provide advice and assistance to the individual and refer information back to us. They will carry out regular visits to assess progress if the rough sleeper does not engage. This is an important tool and a vast improvement on the previously accepted norm of outreach work performed by Homeless Case Officers, Team Leaders and the Manager from the Housing Services Team on an ad hoc basis.

### **Leicester Welfare Provision: Worklink Project (White Goods and Furniture)**

The LWP Worklink Project is one of our key partners most benefiting our homeless households, allowing them to make a fresh start once housing is secured. The Worklink project provides essential furniture and white goods to those households who cannot afford to furnish their new home. This contribution is crucial for previously homeless households to settle in their new accommodation and gives them the best chance to become independent from services. We have also worked closely with the project to provide furniture and white goods for our Leased temporary accommodation, whilst also managing resources where needed to ensure the most vulnerable receive priority goods.

### **Priorities Met: 1, 3, and 4**

#### **Utilising Funding Opportunities**

Our final achievement is our success in securing significant funding in competitive bid processes from Central Government. In the lifetime of the last strategy the Housing Services Team, with support from Senior Leadership and Councillors, have been able to secure additional funding of approximately £2 Million (£1,935,830) to fund projects to meet our four priorities. This funding has been critical in providing new temporary accommodation, expanding our ability to tackle Domestic Abuse and to increase employment opportunities for our vulnerable households.

We have also looked for, and delivered on, opportunities to provide funding from our own available budgets to support partners in delivering projects that are at risk where needed. This willingness underlines our commitment to work with all organisations for the shared goal of preventing homelessness in Blaby.

### **Priorities Met: 1, 2, 3, and 4**



# Homelessness Review Conclusion, Revised Priorities and Actions

## Homelessness Review Conclusion 2020 -2024

2020 to 2024 has presented the Country and subsequently the Homelessness Sector with unprecedented challenges and disruption, arguably not seen since the Second World War. The first global pandemic in over one hundred years, large scale military conflicts in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, global disruption of supply chains causing an inflation surge, a subsequent slowdown in the house building industry and finally a cost of living crisis for individuals and families. Crises whose fragile recovery is significantly dependent on external geo-political factors in an increasingly globalised society. These factors combined have all contributed to an increase in housing unaffordability, a decrease in new affordable housing and an increase in homelessness nationally and in Blaby District.

Despite these overwhelming conditions, the Housing Services Team, and the Council as a whole, have worked diligently to meet the challenges. As shown in the achievements section of the review, we have strived to minimise the impacts on our community by working proactively with all available partners and stakeholders. We have utilised as much additional funding as we can and, on a daily basis through our frontline officers, provided critical support to the most vulnerable in our community. This has often meant going beyond the work of a housing service, especially in cases where our Public Sector partners have been unable to help due to their own challenges.

However, there is more we can do.

Over the lifetime of the new strategy, 2025-2030, we will look to work on, and continually revise and improve, the following four priorities and associated actions

### Priority 1

Prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation

- Continue to make effective use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), charitable organisations and other available funding sources, to prevent homelessness and maintain tenancies.
- Provide effective and timely advice which is outcome focused on those in housing need and concentrates on the prevention of homelessness.
- Be creative and innovative in finding solutions to prevent homelessness, including using funding in a flexible manner.
- Continue to strengthen and develop multi-agency work, to enable joint initiatives and identify those at risk of homelessness, for example, those leaving prison or hospital, families, young people, and care leavers and continue to provide support to help sustain tenancies.
- Reduce stays in temporary accommodation and in particular bed and breakfast accommodation.

## **Priority 2**

Increase the supply of affordable housing for both General Needs Households and Vulnerable Groups

- Continue to work in partnership with registered housing providers, strategic partners, and Homes England to maximise the number of affordable homes built to meet the demand of homeless households and those on our housing register.
- Continue the good work in seeking innovative solutions to develop move on and supported housing for households who are vulnerable and/or have complex needs.
- Collaborate closely with colleagues across the council to contribute to the ambitions for housing development opportunities within Blaby.
- Review the landlord incentive package currently offered to assist with the recruitment of new landlords to increase access to this sector and investigate new ways of collaborating with landlords to assist in reducing use of B&B accommodation.
- Continue to encourage owners of empty homes to consider renting their property to those who need affordable homes.

## **Priority 3**

Continue to develop partnership work with existing stakeholders and seek to form new innovative partnerships

- Develop inter-agency joint work and understanding of respective procedures, pathways, and expectations.
- Collaborate with partners to address the gap in the provision of support and to minimise the impact of welfare reform.
- Continue to build upon the sub-regional initiatives such as the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme and Rough Sleeper Initiatives E.g. Housing First and Rough Sleeper Outreach Service
- Pursue cross-authority projects and strategic and operational planning. E.g., Care Leaver Protocol, Young Persons Protocol and Prison Release Protocol
- Promote the prevention agenda and ensure that all council staff, members, and partners are kept updated and informed.

## **Priority 4**

Supporting vulnerable households to be independent and self-reliant

- Continue to build upon our work with active Registered Providers to deliver new supported accommodation for vulnerable households with complex needs
- Work with our partner agencies to deliver outreach and advice services to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Enable vulnerable households to access our Tenancy Sustainment Officer, Resident Support Team and our Domestic Abuse Link Worker to help support

them to sustain tenancies and access other services e.g. specialist financial support

- Build on relationships with key partners including adult and children's services to increase support and accommodation options
- Reduce the number of people sleeping rough by developing a person-centred approach where all personal circumstances are considered, and interventions are tailored accordingly e.g. the housing first initiative
- Work in partnership to support service users to get in or nearer to the workplace
- Develop an assessment process for complex cases, identifying individual households and monitoring outcomes
- Continue to seek creative solutions for complex cases through the Leicestershire "Complex Needs Accommodation Board"

### **Action Plan**

Following the required six week consultation period with all key stakeholders and partners we will develop an action plan incorporating the key priorities and assign each action to a responsible lead officer within the Council. As the previous four years have reaffirmed, this will be a dynamic document allowing the Council to change and adapt our practices to unforeseen challenges that may arise.