



HOMELESSNESS

IMPACT REVIEW 2018-22



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Tenant from the Next Steps
Accommodation programme in
Norwich



INTRODUCTION

Tackling homelessness has been part of Broadland's DNA since 1963. The 1960s saw a national focus on homelessness, with both Shelter and Crisis established. Neither thought there would still be a need for their work 60 years later. Both expected that politicians would have resolved homelessness before now.

In 2016, Broadland was one of the founders of Homes for Cathy. A coalition of over 100 landlords, Homes for Cathy was established to refocus housing associations on ending homelessness. Working with Crisis, it has developed tangible landlord commitments that will make a positive difference to people.

The Covid pandemic fast-tracked solutions to homelessness, with the Government funding safe, secure places for all rough sleepers to stay during the first lockdown in 2020. This proved that it could be done – that where there is a will, there is a way.

The establishment of the Norfolk Strategic Housing Partnership and Homelessness Forum are among the few positive outcomes of Covid. Involving public and third-sector partners, for the first time we have a countywide commitment to ending homelessness locally.



This report shares our work addressing and preventing homelessness over the last four years. Nearly all projects have been delivered in partnerships with others. We know that one single organisation cannot defeat homelessness on its own, no matter who they are. Effective, joined-up partnerships are essential if we want to find sustainable solutions to homelessness.

We remain committed. Committed to providing new homes. Committed to helping our tenants sustain their tenancies. Committed to making a difference locally.

Michael Newey
Chief Executive Officer

“ I HAVE A HOME, AND I FEEL SAFE ”

What went well?

Tenants having support and options of how the support is given:

“[The Housing First model] is brilliant. You couldn't ask for anything more. It is not just the property, but also where they are located. I am starting to get up every day and walking around the block and feeling safe. Security is huge for me, and I feel secure. The support has helped me a lot”

“The beginning was difficult because I found it hard to trust people. Things went well because of the support. The time before I got the flat was good to build good working relationships”

“I would recommend the model, and the lead-up and building relationships were important to me”

What could have gone better?

“More clarity about move-in dates [so the] move-in ran more smoothly”

How have things changed for me?

“[Without this], I would still be homeless. I got back in contact with my best friend. I left a toxic relationship and had support to deal with that”

“I would probably be in prison without this opportunity. I feel safer. I have more regular contact with my mum and this is going well. I have had some contact with my children. I feel more settled where I am”

“When my probation ends, it will be the first time in over 10 years that I have not been involved with the justice system, no pending court dates, no investigations, no bail. This is a massive thing for me”

The text for this introduction is taken from interviews with Housing First tenants in King's Lynn. It marks the first part of a Reaching Out approach to tenant involvement which seeks to put the voices of people experiencing services at the heart of improving and delivering them.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Broadland Housing signed up to the 9 Homes for Cathy commitments in late 2018. It was unanimously endorsed by our Board.

This brief report sets out our successes and what we have learned from 4 years* of delivering against the commitments. It also explores some future priorities for Broadland, so that we can continue playing our part to prevent and tackle homelessness.

Headline findings

- 1** Broadland was well positioned to respond quickly to ‘Everybody In’ (the pandemic-related homelessness campaign) because of our existing Homes for Cathy commitments and Corporate Strategy.
- 2** There is now a ‘can do’ culture across Broadland. Staff take the initiative to help prevent and tackle homelessness. The focus is on setting people up to succeed. We have changed the conversation around homelessness.
- 3** It is hard to over-state the importance of good partnership work with local authorities, charities and other housing providers. Many of the successes we report here are because of strong working relationships with our partners.
- 4** The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted issues around homelessness, and there was a temporary ban on evictions. Broadland joined with other housing associations to work closely with our local authorities. We helped to shape the debate on homelessness through our Homes for Cathy regional seminars.
- 5** We have played our part as members of the Norfolk Strategic Housing Partnership and the Homelessness Forum. Our CEO, Michael Newey, is vice-chair of the Housing Partnership.
- 6** This report sets out some very good outcomes in preventing and tackling homelessness. Going forwards, we have a challenge. Capacity is limited. We need to continue a partnership approach in order to keep providing homes targeted at people experiencing homelessness.

**up to March 2022*

AT A GLANCE

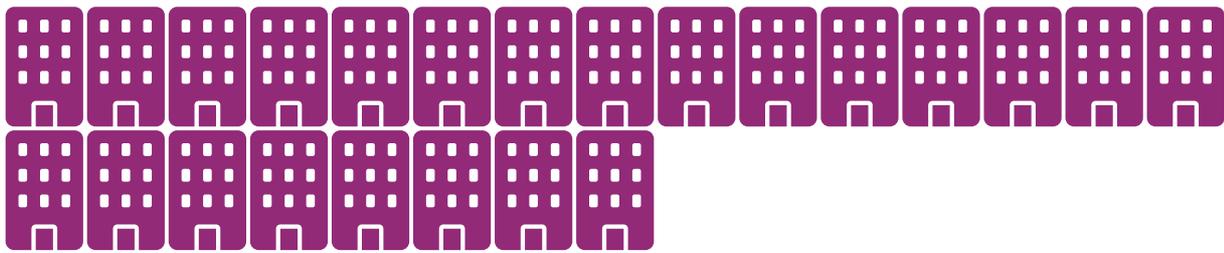
Broadland's Homes for Cathy plan 2018-22



Provided **16 Housing First homes** in partnership with Norwich City Council and King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council



Provided **10 homes with support for people leaving prison**, in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office and Norwich City Council



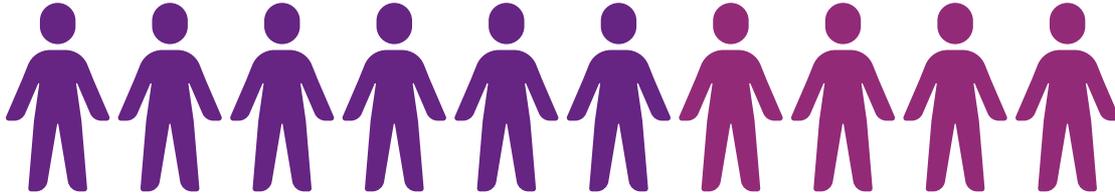
Provided **23 'move on'** or homes with support for people who have been homeless



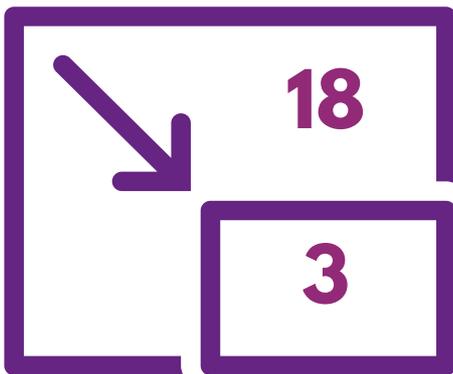
Plans in place for a further **24** homes for **people who have experienced homelessness**: 7 at Ketts Hill (Norwich), 7 at Reid Way (King's Lynn), 5 at Thetford (March 2023); supporting the YMCA to access 5 Housing First homes for young people (by March 2023)

AT A GLANCE

Broadland's Homes for Cathy plan 2018-22



Provided homes with space for up to **10 migrants with no recourse to public funds**. Four of these spaces were used to house Afghan interpreters who had to flee their home. We have let 2 flats directly to Afghan refugees

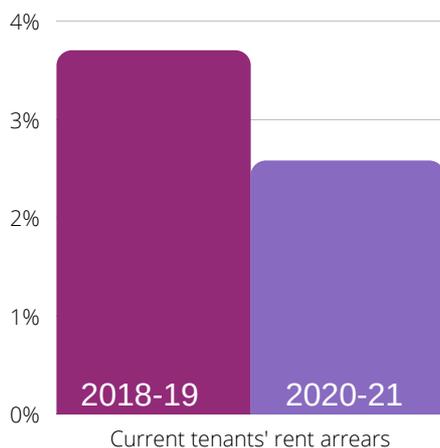


Reduced evictions for rent arrears from 18 (2017-18) to 3 (in 2019-20 and 2021-22). There was an evictions ban for most of 2020-21

£ 127,500 -
178,500



Annual savings 2018-22 from reducing evictions for arrears (average cost of an eviction is £8,500-£11,900)



Reduced rent arrears
At year end 2018-19, gross current tenants' arrears (including Housing Benefit) stood at 3.7%. At the end of 2020-21, they were 2.58%

NEW HOMES

We have provided 49 additional homes specifically for people who have experienced homelessness, with funding from Homes England, Norwich City Council and others.

What have we achieved?

Along with other local housing providers, Broadland supported local authorities with the huge challenge of 'Everyone In' (providing accommodation to everyone during the Covid-19 lockdown of 2020). Funding streams became available towards the end of the lockdown, with very quick turnaround times. Broadland worked in partnership to support bids for this funding.

From RSAP (Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme) and other funding agreements, we have gained **£3.4 million capital** and £829,000 revenue to provide **73 additional homes** specifically for people who have experienced homelessness. At the end of 2021-22, we had provided 49 of these homes. This total includes our modular-build homes at Lakenfields, Norwich, which attracted a lot of positive attention in the local media.

It also includes remodelled outdated temporary accommodation into 7 new move-on flats, with funding from Homes England. All these homes are let fully furnished.

HOMES FOR CATHY COMMITMENTS

- 5: To commit to meeting the needs of vulnerable tenant groups
- 6: To work in partnership to provide a range of affordable housing options which meet the needs of all homeless people in their local communities
- 7: To ensure that properties offered to homeless people should be ready to move into

We have provided homes to entrenched rough sleepers, people leaving prison and those who were ready to move on from hostels.

We have created partnerships with external organisations, including local authorities, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and other housing associations. These partnerships have been central to achieving successful outcomes.



NEW HOMES

What went well?

We were able to provide good quality homes with fittings and furnishings. This made a real difference to the lives of the tenants who moved in.

We are on a journey as an organisation, learning about how best to provide Housing First accommodation. There has been buy-in from staff and we have educated people about our values as an organisation. The team has a better understanding of the people these homes are provided for.

We strengthened existing partnerships and created new ones with contractors and support providers.

Challenges and lessons learned

The speed of funding rounds meant that they were disjointed, which caused problems. In addition to this, local authorities took different approaches that we had to adapt to.

We learned that internal communication is key to the success of a project like this. Communication needs to be started earlier and could be improved the next time we embark on a similar project. We should have facilitated peer support across Broadland's teams earlier.

“Leon found the move-in process very easy and has all his bills set up by direct debit. He feels he has come a long way and is very happy to have a home of his own after such a long time. He can have his children visit and stay over every other weekend”

“John is going back to Merchants Terrace as a volunteer to support tenants, as he has life experiences that are similar and feels he would like to help homeless people to move on as he has”

“The team were driven to get the job done, each directorate pulled together to achieve this”
(Local Delivery Manager, Broadland Housing Association)

Alexandra House, King's Lynn



NEW HOMES

We have seconded a member of staff to a Housing First role to ensure the right level of housing management and support.

Our can-do attitude should be balanced with the impact of these more complex schemes on the organisation. We did not expect such a significant impact on our core housing management teams. Our new Housing First role will help establish the right working partnerships between landlord, support, commissioners and tenants.

Some of the homes we have acquired have presented particular challenges and the locations have not always been ideal. They do not always achieve the quality we would expect from our new homes. We have acted quickly to deal with the issues arising, such as arranging damp and electrical works.

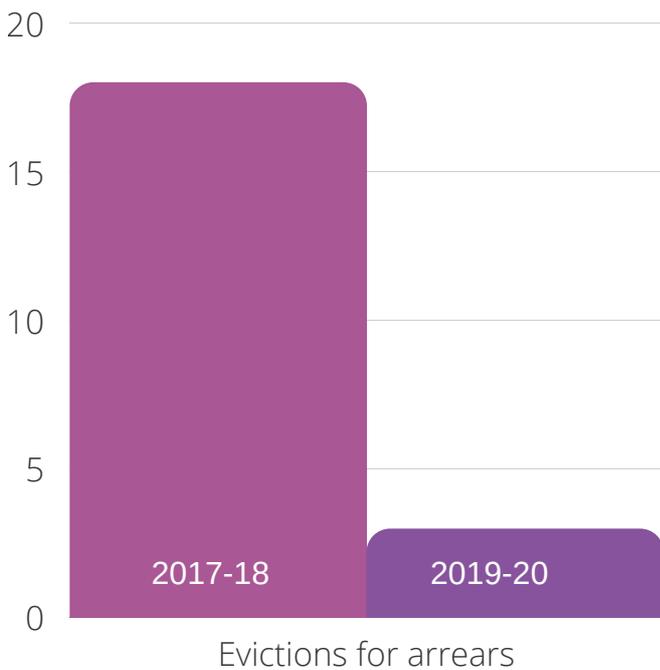
We are building greater clarity with our partners about the support they need to provide to tenants, and reviewing how we monitor this. We had to move quickly to get these homes and projects in place, because of funding restrictions and this was the right thing to do. However, earlier planning for different tenancies (as required by funders) and properties outside our standard specification would be helpful.

Ideally we would like to develop a joined-up, place-based approach. We want to provide the right homes in a more proactive way. For example, housing for people who have experienced homelessness would be pepper-potted throughout the area.



Lakenfields
on completion in
December 2021

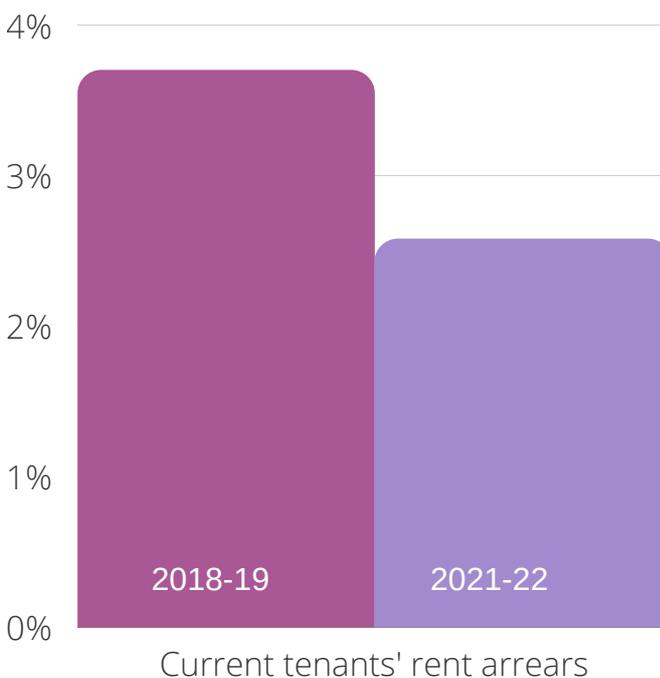
PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS



HOMES FOR CATHY COMMITMENTS

- 4: To not make any tenant seeking to prevent their homelessness, homeless (as defined by the Crisis plan definition)
- 5: To commit to meeting the needs of vulnerable tenant groups

Since signing up to the Homes for Cathy commitments, Broadland has **reduced evictions for arrears** from 18 (2017-18) to 3 (2019-20, also 2021-22). During the pandemic there was a ban on evictions.



Rent arrears have also reduced.

Current tenants' arrears stood at 3.7% at year end 2018-19, and 2.58% at the end of 2021-22. We have not refused nominations for housing on the grounds of affordability alone.

The Homes for Cathy commitments have driven a significant cultural shift at Broadland. Staff now use their professional judgement to create innovative and supportive approaches. This way of managing rent income has benefits both for tenants and Broadland as an organisation.

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

Cost of a single eviction



Each eviction costs between £8,500 (Broadland estimate, 2019) and £11,900 (Shelter Scotland estimate, 2021). This means a reduction of 15 evictions saved Broadland around £127,500 to £178,500.



Broadland has invested significantly in tenancy support. A team of 7 provide support and signposting to an average of 250 households at any one time. This investment has made a real difference by helping tenants to sustain their tenancies.

What went well

Staff have responded to the challenge of removing evictions from their 'toolkit' with creativity and determination. The cultural expectations of the Homes for Cathy commitments have empowered staff to try different approaches. They now see possession proceedings as a last resort.

Partnerships and influencing are an area of success. Broadland has built on existing good partnerships with local authorities, using the [Commitment to Refer](#) to access support, including [Discretionary Housing Payments](#) to prevent evictions.

We are one of several social landlords in Norfolk committed to preventing evictions as we come out of the pandemic restrictions. We have co-ordinated a joint statement which gives more detail.

Broadland staff have spoken at local and national events, including [CIH](#) (Chartered Institute of Housing) and [HQN](#) (Housing Quality Network) events, about the drive to reduce evictions.

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

Lessons learned and next steps

Our successes in preventing homelessness come from having a clear strategic vision and empowering our staff to deliver.

We need to do more work at the start of tenancy, so that tenants are set up to succeed. This links to our commitments around access to housing.

We want to review data around tenancy failure and abandonments to understand

where we could make the most impact and prevent these issues happening in future.

We have been largely successful in preventing evictions for rent arrears. Our focus now will be on working with partners to avoid evictions because of anti-social behaviour (ASB) turning into homelessness, while providing good support for victims of ASB.



Family in new play park at St James Lodge, King's Lynn

ACCESS TO HOUSING

We have worked with our partners to open up housing nominations. We aim to support, rather than refuse, applicants if there are concerns about them being able to sustain their tenancy. We aim to provide homes that are ready for tenants to move into.

What have we achieved?

Broadland has contributed to the homelessness strategies of local authorities across our area.

We have changed the conversation around lettings. Rather than viewing a letting as a risk, we focus on how to support people to succeed in their tenancies. We record any refusal of nominations and do not refuse social rented housing on the basis of affordability alone.

First-time tenants 2020-22 (YTD)

Total = 125

90%

Sustained tenancy for at least 1 year

76%

Clear rent account after first 12 months

HOMES FOR CATHY COMMITMENTS

2: To operate flexible allocations and eligibility policies, which allow the unique set of circumstances and housing history of the individual applicant to be considered

3: To offer constructive solutions to applicants who aren't deemed eligible for an offer of a home

7: To ensure that properties offered to homeless people should be ready to move into

The Tenancy Support team worked with 125 first-time tenants in 2020-21 and 2021-22 (year to date). Of these, 90% sustained their tenancy for at least a year and 76% had a clear rent account (no arrears) on the first anniversary of their tenancy.

In 2019, we agreed a lettings protocol with Norfolk County Council to provide homes for young people leaving care. Eight homes across 4 housing associations were provided (3 from Broadland) for young people who had not been able to sustain accommodation in the past. Seven of these tenancies have been successful.

ACCESS TO HOUSING

During lockdown, we supported local authorities with direct lets to homeless households. Altogether we have housed 163 homeless households in 2021-22, 117 in 2020-21 and 82 in 2019-2020.

The evictions ban during Covid meant that our temporary accommodation for families was not needed. We built on links with [Leeway](#) (a local domestic abuse charity) to allow survivors of domestic abuse to use these homes.

What went well?

Our Homes for Cathy plan has created a culture where staff can embrace changes. Colleagues have stepped up to take ownership of our approach to lettings. We have started to challenge any stigma around homelessness.

Developing a more digital and efficient lettings process has given us more capacity to support applicants from a homeless background. Since March 2020, we have spent **£19,000** on providing flooring and basic household goods so that homes are ready for tenants to move into. We have also provided signposting and referrals to help tenants get support from local funds and charities. This is in addition to the homes specifically funded for people who have experienced homelessness, which have all been provided fully furnished.



Lessons learned and next steps

We have not been consistent in monitoring that our homes are ready to move into. We need to improve this at the 4-week call stage. We will review our processes for offering homes that are ready to move into, so that we can support tenants better in future.

We need to develop a more person-centred approach to lettings. If we can take advantage of greater efficiencies from more

ACCESS TO HOUSING

digital working, we will be able to support tenants who are on a more complex journey.

We recognise that Broadland is just one partner locally. To offer constructive solutions consistently, we need an area-wide approach with really flexible housing allocations and eligibility policies.

The Norfolk Strategic Housing Partnership has been an important step forward for the area, as local partners come together to prevent and tackle homelessness. Our CEO, Michael Newey, is vice-chair.

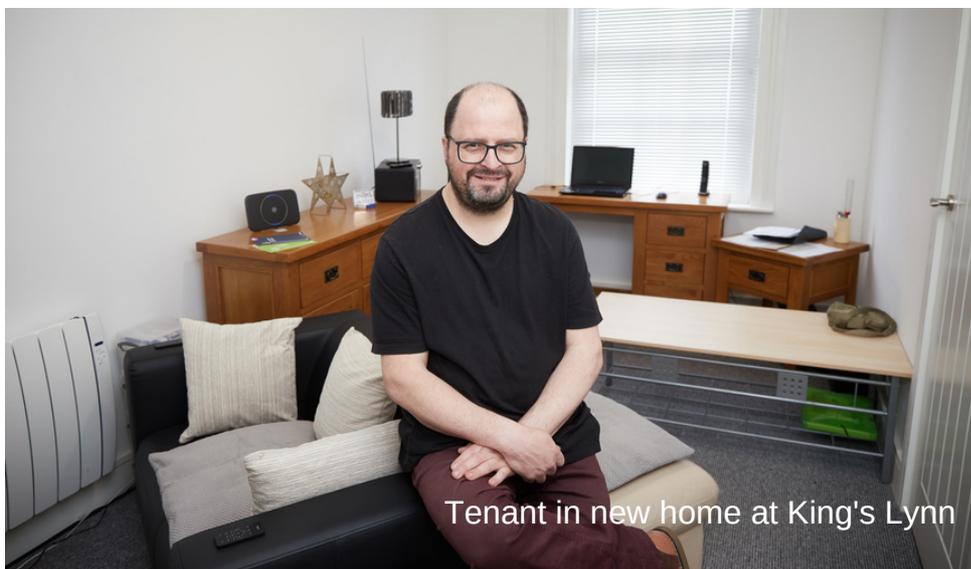
As a member of Independent East, we have benefited from a partnership with Your Own Place. This will provide training in how to sustain a tenancy and independent living skills for up to 400 people across Norfolk and Suffolk.



The **Norfolk Strategic Housing Partnership**



Independent
east



Tenant in new home at King's Lynn

MIGRANT HOMELESSNESS

We have worked with partners to provide homes to migrant homeless households.

What have we achieved?

We have provided homes for up to 10 people at any one time, who otherwise would have had nowhere to live and no recourse to public funds. This has enabled us to react quickly to changing requirements: for example, be prepared to let homes for interpreters fleeing Afghanistan in 2021.

We have been able to do this through strong partnership working with the People from Abroad team at Norfolk County Council. We have organised and spoken at regional and national events. This partnership work is cited in the Kerslake Commission on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping.

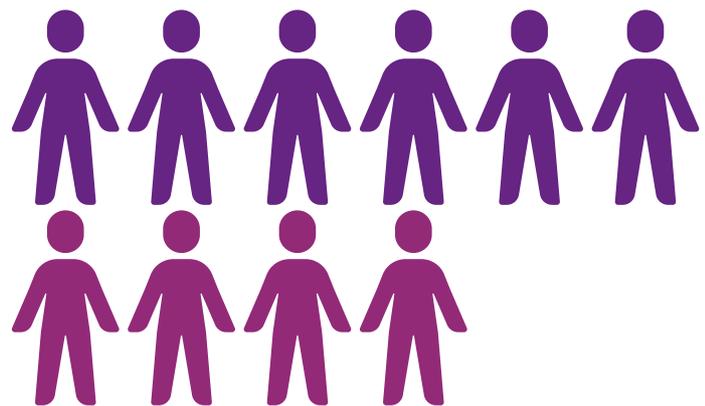
What went well?

Migrants with no recourse to public funds represent a significant proportion of people experiencing homelessness. The people who we housed were able to resolve issues such as documentation, finding work or improving their language skills when they had a home and the right support.

The links we had in place also meant we could quickly adapt when there were different needs.

HOMES FOR CATHY COMMITMENT

8: To contribute to ending migrant homelessness in areas where housing associations operate



We have provided homes with space for up to 10 migrants with no recourse to public funds. More recently, one of these flats has provided temporary homes for 4 interpreters fleeing Afghanistan

For example, one migrant who had been granted refugee status at the start of lockdown was living in unsuitable shared accommodation and unable to find a new home. Sadly, he had a terminal illness. We were able to let him an intermediate rent flat directly. This meant he could spend the last months of his life in a safe, comfortable home.

MIGRANT HOMELESSNESS

The project has been easy to manage due to an excellent partnership with the People from Abroad team. We have not experienced any housing management issues and very few repairs have been reported.

The project was well supported by the staff team. Many were keen to learn about the issues that migrant homeless households experience and how housing can help.

Lessons learned and next steps

We have not shared much about the work we have done to tackle migrant homelessness. Our review identified that we should be braver about tackling stigma and talk to others about what we have done.

We want to make sure that tenants understand their rights and to ensure that we continue to provide high-quality accommodation. To this end we will improve our monitoring arrangements with our partners.

The legal work to support this type of project takes longer than we had anticipated. In future we could be a little less risk-averse and make a long-term commitment. This could ultimately save money.

HOMES FOR CATHY COMMITMENT

8: To contribute to ending migrant homelessness in areas where housing associations operate



Norfolk
County Council



Broadland Housing Association
NCFC, Carrow Road,
Norwich NR1 1HU

Customer Services
t: 0303 303 0003
e: enq@broadlandgroup.org



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