

# Case study: How to approach best practice in addressing emergency homelessness assistance

# Beacon House and Essex Law Clinic



FEATURE  
How Beacon House has spent 25 years helping homeless in Colchester

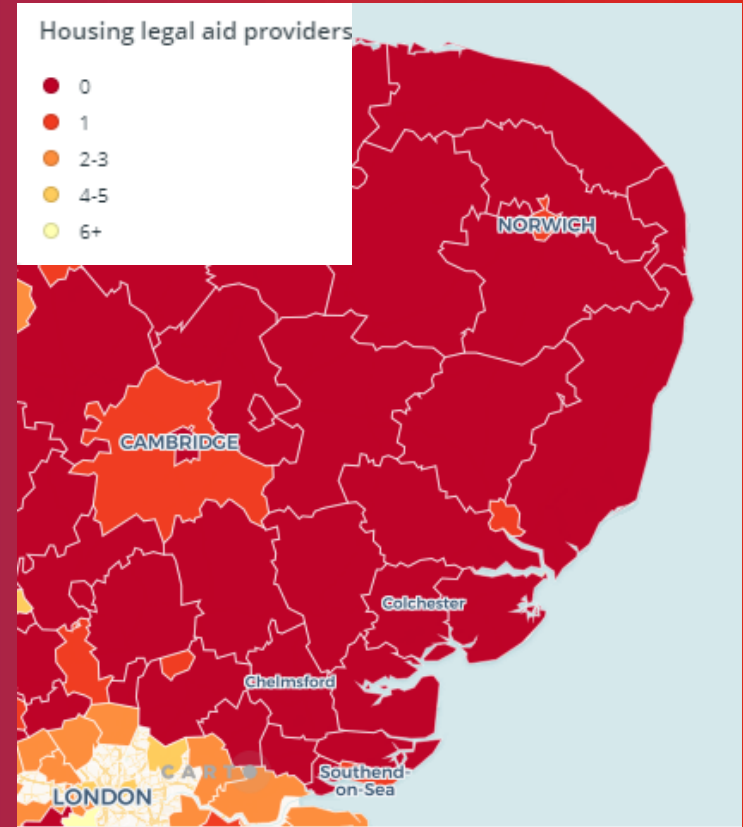
18th September 2021

# Legal context

- Local authority duties to those made homeless
- S188 duties under Housing Act 1996
- Challenging negative decisions and refusals of assistance
- Value and effect of Judicial Review

# Housing legal aid

- Role of Legal Aid
- Availability of Legal Aid
- Impact of Legal Aid deserts



The Law Society 'Housing – Legal Aid deserts' June 2022  
<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/campaigns/legal-aid-deserts/housing>

# Impact of Legal Aid deserts

*The other thing we've noticed is that post-LASPO, when housing advice deserts were created, there's nobody in those areas to hold local authorities to account. [...] Anecdotally we see that when there are no lawyers and advisors to hold an authority or a public body to account in an area, then systemic failures and bad practices thrive.*

Jo Underwood, head of strategic litigation, Shelter (2020)

<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/insight/behind-the-numbers-what-impacts-have-legal-aid-cuts-had-on-housing-64986>

# Practical approaches

- The limits of non-legal challenges
- Informal challenges
- Collaborative practice

“to be a rights holder, and for housing to be treated as a fundamental human right, one must be able to claim rights, to give voice and context to the deprivation of dignity and rights experienced”

‘Access to justice for the right to housing’ Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing UNGA A/HRC/40/61 15 January 2019

# Essex Law Clinic and Beacon House

- Project findings
- Client successes and quick wins
- Developing a collaborative approach with local authority

# The growing problem – locally and nationally

## Current Statistics – Government Data Quarter 4, 2021

	Households Assessed	% Assessed as Owed a Duty
October-December 2021 - England	69,300	96.1%
October-December 2021 - LA	164	87.8%

## Current Statistics – Government Data Quarter 1, 2022

	Households Assessed	% Assessed as Owed a Duty
January-March 2022 - England	76,880	96.6%
January-March 2022 - LA	200	91.5%



# Impact on Homeless and Vulnerable clients

*Practitioner view from  
Michelle Wilkinson RGN QN Inclusion Nurse  
Beacon House*

# Thank you

To share best practice and develop this project  
across East Anglia please contact us:

Lucy Davies – [lucy.davies@essex.ac.uk](mailto:lucy.davies@essex.ac.uk)  
Benjamin O'Connell – [bo20275@essex.ac.uk](mailto:bo20275@essex.ac.uk)

# Q&A

