

Five challenges for our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030

Proud of Ipswich: enabling residents and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping in Ipswich.

Our Corporate Strategy and commitment to tackling homelessness.

The Ipswich Borough Council Corporate Strategy: 'Proud of Ipswich' outlines the Council's five priorities. These describe how we will work to achieve our ambition to "champion our community and revitalise our town" and have shaped the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and its priorities. The five priorities of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy set out how we will enable our residents and prevent homelessness and rough sleeping in Ipswich. We want to be proud of the high-quality service we provide and continue to develop our service to meet the needs of our residents.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy guides the work of Housing Advice teams including the Housing Options team, Accommodation team, Rough Sleeping Project and the private lettings team (Ipswich LET).

There is a central theme throughout this strategy of earlier prevention and utilising data and technology to deliver accessible, targeted, successful, and cost-effective services.

Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy priorities.

Our strategy is built around 5 priorities, formed as result of internal and external consultation, which address the key challenges we face to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Ipswich. Our priorities describe our plans to continue to develop high quality services to address key areas, such as targeting early prevention, facilitating access to suitable accommodation, and partnership working. Additionally, they highlight our continuing priority to end rough sleeping in Ipswich. Over the next 5 years we will work with the community and our partners, taking a holistic, preventative, informed approach, exploring new ways of approaching the issues we face in addressing homelessness.

Our priorities.

1. Provide a high-quality advice service.
2. Focus on early prevention.
3. Work with our partners to end rough sleeping.
4. Facilitate access to suitable accommodation.
5. Build and maintain partnerships that support residents.

Provide a high-quality advice service.

Our vision

We will provide a high quality accessible and timely housing advice service to all residents and local people in need. Access to high quality advice is essential in preventing homelessness.

There are many factors that can contribute to the risk of homelessness and the Housing Options Team needs to be knowledgeable in all types of tenure, family law, legal rights of occupation, debt, the criminal justice system, health, and social care needs. There are other specialist advice agencies for specific groups who might be the most appropriate agency to support an individual, and the Council needs to ensure we are supporting those agencies to prevent homelessness as a priority.

We will continue to create a range of accessible advice options to meet the needs of our residents such as information available through our website, telephone and in person. We will design our services with our residents and ensure they are easy to use. We will work with our partners to support the vulnerable residents of Ipswich to access and maintain suitable accommodation, including those with dependent children, who experience physical or mental health problems and disabilities, abuse and violence (including domestic violence), who have left the care system, who are institutionalised having recently left prison, who are institutionalised having left the armed forces, gypsies and travellers and older people. We will ensure that support is timely and easy to access.

To achieve this, we will.

Aim 1 - Ensure staff are highly trained housing professionals with an empathetic approach, delivering inclusive services that are welcoming and empower people to seek help as early as possible, without stigma.

Aim 2 - Provide a range of means to access services meeting the needs of all members of our community, making the best use of resources and technology.

Aim 3 - To be open fair and transparent in our advice, putting the person at the centre to ensure they have clear options and to manage expectations. Listening and learning from complaints to improve our services and the customer experience.

Aim 4 - Work with other relevant Council departments and partners within the town delivering advice and support to share expertise and provide holistic support to customers seeking advice, accessing shared training and resources where possible.

Focus on early prevention.

Our vision
We will focus our resources on early prevention, working effectively with our partners to ensure the delivery of services that are complimentary and support our residents and those in greatest need.

Homelessness is disruptive, costly, and distressing whatever the circumstances with often time being spent in temporary accommodation. We will identify and work with those at risk of homelessness at the earliest opportunity, to maximise successful outcomes. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has put a legal duty on councils to offer more support to a wider range of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, including those who do not have a priority need and to provide earlier assistance. We recognise that early prevention is key to effectiveness and with increasing financial pressures on public services, it is essential that services are designed to be most effective and sustainable so that they are available to help those who need them.

To achieve this, we will.

Aim 1 - Investigate new models to early/upstream prevention by early identification of at-risk groups using data and insight to target resources where they are most effective in preventing homelessness, and ensuring funding is having the maximum impact on the prevention and relief of homelessness.

Aim 2 - Develop and review robust pathways for vulnerable groups such as residents with mental health problems, care leavers and survivors of domestic abuse, and any other groups that might be identified in local data analysis.

Aim 3 - Promote the 'Duty To Refer' (DTR) placed on statutory partners where they believe there is a risk of homelessness, or someone is already homeless. Expand and encourage voluntary groups to use this process.

Work with our partners to end rough sleeping.

Our vision

We will ensure rough sleeping is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur that it is rare, brief, and non-recurrent.

We aim, where possible to relieve and prevent rough sleeping by working with all relevant partners and agencies within Ipswich, sharing the governments vision for this priority. The Suffolk Housing Board commissioned Campbell Tickell consultants to produce a report on developing a system approach to preventing rough sleeping, ahead of the end of the current funding arrangements in 2025. Within the rough sleeping project, we deliver multiple interventions to relieve and prevent rough sleeping that include support and accommodation-based services.

To achieve this, we will.

Aim 1 - Work with partners to deliver joined up services for the most vulnerable.

Aim 2 - To make an off the street offer to all rough sleepers where possible.

Aim 3 - Work proactively with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to share risk, inform policy, maximise grant funding, review annual ending rough sleeping plans, deliver on grant conditions, and complete all data returns in a timely way.

Aim 4 - Deliver on the Housing First project by continuing to lobby for sustainable funding.

Aim 5 - Deliver on a bi-monthly steering group to discuss data and trends, funding opportunities and foster collaboration. Continuing to review and develop the group, and to expand membership to a wider group of partners.

Aim 6 - Be the strategic lead for local services for rough sleepers, working proactively with all partners and sharing resources. Delivering a joined-up approach to ending rough sleeping that is reflected in all relevant published strategies.

Aim 7 - Maximise the support to all Housing First tenants to work towards graduation from the project.

Aim 8 - Educate the public and raise awareness of the good work that is being undertaken.

Aim 9 - Engage grass roots groups to join with statutory and voluntary services to deliver interventions, by being open and inclusive, encouraging participation and ideas from interested parties.

Aim 10 - Be open to new learning and research in the field to ensure we are learning from and sharing best practice. Benchmark our outcomes nationally, regionally and with our "nearest neighbours" to share progress.

Aim 11 - Implement an improved system to support clients in getting care needs assessments.

Aim 12 - Implement joint working to ensure all rough sleepers are safeguarded.

Facilitate access to suitable accommodation.

Our vision

We will help residents to find, access and maintain suitable and affordable accommodation. We will continue to evolve and develop our offer to best meet housing need.

Advising and assisting applicants to secure suitable accommodation is vital for us to succeed in preventing and relieving homelessness. For this to be effective there must be suitable accommodation available and the means for residents to maintain or secure it. We will continue to work across departments and with our partners to share skills and resources. The Council wants to build more Council homes and encourage house builders to continue building affordable housing as well, as set out in our Corporate Strategy. However, due to the increased pressures on the housing market and on social housing, private rented accommodation provides an important solution to meet housing need. We will continue to assist households to secure private rented accommodation, through the Council's private lettings team (Ipswich LET). We will build upon our successes, by providing assistance through a number of schemes (deposit bond scheme, landlord security scheme and rent guarantee scheme).

To achieve this, we will.

Aim 1 - Review the current provision of temporary accommodation to ensure the Council provides a high-quality offer to statutory homeless applicants that is financially sustainable.

Aim 2 - Work with Council departments on the development of new affordable housing, ensuring the right split of property types and sizes as demand changes.

Aim 3 - Be a proactive member of Gateway to Homechoice allocations scheme, ensuring vulnerable groups including homeless households are given the correct priority.

Aim 4 - Increase access to the private sector by offering attractive rent deposit and guarantee schemes to both landlords and tenants.

Aim 5 - Continue to develop ways to support residents to maintain their accommodation through schemes such as money advice and mediation.

Aim 6 - Continue to work with our partners to provide tailored support for those with specialist and complex needs such as domestic abuse and criminal justice.

Aim 7 - Continue to work with our partners to further develop housing options for one-person households.

Aim 8 - Explore funding opportunities for specific groups including refugees and rough sleepers.

Build and maintain partnerships that support residents.

Our vision
We will work with partners to make sure that partnerships, processes, and the right resources are in place to support residents, including the vulnerable.

The network of partner agencies working together across Suffolk forms the Suffolk system. This is essential for the delivery of successful homelessness prevention and relief outcomes for the residents of Ipswich. To be successful we must share ideas and innovation, design processes and target resources with a coordinated and joined up approach. Ipswich Borough Council values the work and contributions of all statutory and non-statutory services and seeks to continue to build and develop strong relationships, to enable the most successful outcomes for residents needing assistance. With our partners we will continue to drive the further development of early prevention measures, particularly those that focus on health, skills, employment, and education due to their relationship to the causes of homelessness.

To achieve this, we will.

Aim 1 - Work to minimise the impact of the ending of housing related support funding on residents and explore other funding opportunities to protect services to vulnerable one-person households.

Aim 2 - Work with statutory partners through the Suffolk Housing Board to ensure a joined-up approach across Suffolk with shared aims.

Aim 3 - Facilitate fair access to mental health services for vulnerable groups who might struggle to access mainstream services.

Aim 4 - Contribute to the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure projects undertaken include people experiencing homelessness as a vulnerable group and to ensure fair access to health and wellbeing services.

Aim 5 - Ensure we are undertaking a strategic approach to partnership working and are aware of how our involvement is set out in the policies and strategies of partner agencies.