



Ipswich Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 - 2030

PROUD OF IPSWICH
enabling residents and preventing
homelessness and rough sleeping in Ipswich.





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Foreword

Homelessness and rough sleeping remain an important issue for the Council and for the residents of Ipswich. Rough sleeping is the most visible and dangerous form of homelessness and the problems and needs affecting this group are complex.

The Rough Sleeping Project has continued to grow with the support of government funding enabling further interventions to be developed to address the needs of this vulnerable group. This strategy sets out how we will continue to work with our partners to end rough sleeping as a key priority.

However, homelessness is an issue stretching wider than rough sleeping. Homelessness can affect anyone, including families and across all groups within society. Indeed, due to recent economic pressures many more households have found themselves experiencing difficulties and in need of our assistance.

There are many national challenges that we face to prevent and relieve homelessness and rough sleeping. These include the shortage of housing, including social housing, and the wider issues that impact on homelessness such as health and social issues. In addition, our services, as well as those of all Local Authorities, have faced increasing financial pressures in recent years.

Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018, the Housing Options team adapted to new ways of working, providing greater assistance to individuals without a priority need and at an earlier stage. The team has continued to develop new schemes, roles, and ways of helping people in need of assistance, working with partner agencies who are vital to our success.

Faced with the challenges, this strategy aims to take a fresh approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. Focussing on early prevention is an important priority to deliver successful and sustainable services. Facilitating access to suitable accommodation is an essential priority to prevent and relieve homelessness, and therefore for this strategy. To achieve this, measures that enable households to maintain their current accommodation and assist households to access the private rented sector are crucial.

Important themes that run through this strategy include the need to work with

partners to address the wider issues that lead to households becoming homeless and threatened with homelessness. Additionally, the need to use data and technology to provide accessible and cost-effective services. Ensuring we make best use of our resources and further develop housing advice services that we can continue to be proud of.

Councillor Alasdair Ross

Housing Portfolio Holder



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.

We want to support the "Proud of Ipswich" strategy for a thriving town by working with our partners to "provide services to the most vulnerable, including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, which are simple and easy to access, ensuring people can be referred to other services when they need more help" and "prevent rough sleeping by making sure that there are active support services for people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough".

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 will 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, Temporary Accommodation team, Rough Sleeping Project, the private lettings team (Ipswich LET) and the Policy team.

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

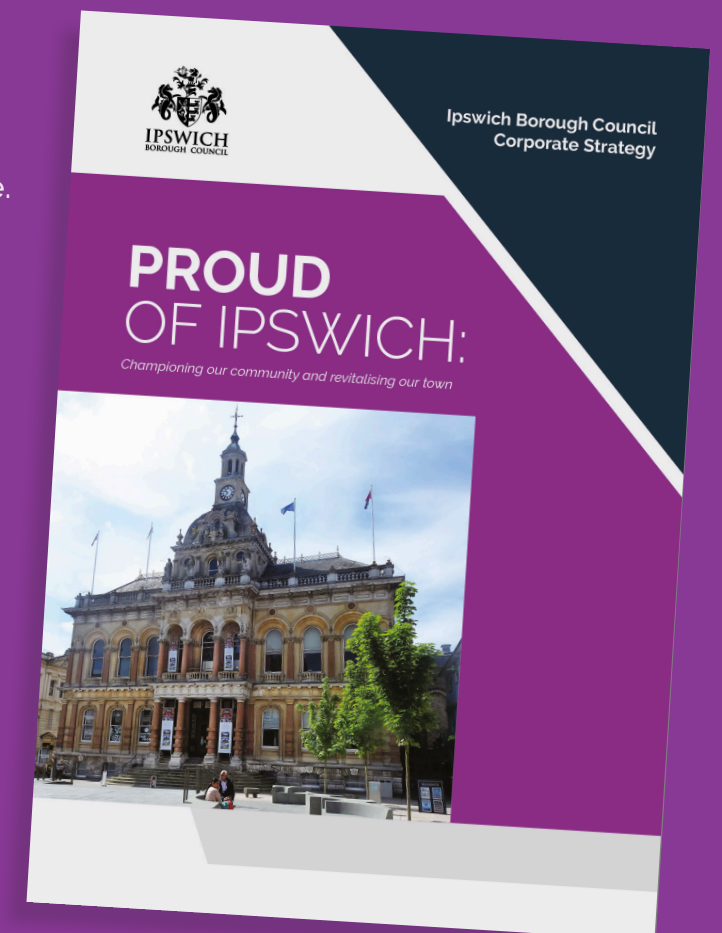
Corporate Strategy Priorities

- ✓ A thriving town centre.
- ✓ Meeting the housing needs of our community.
- ✓ A carbon neutral council.
- ✓ Promoting community wellbeing and fairness.
- ✓ A financially sustainable council providing good quality services.

The theme of meeting the housing needs of our community has the biggest influence on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, however elements of the other themes also have an impact.

Corporate Strategy Mission

- To work with our community to shape the future and achieve a better quality of life for everyone.
- To put customers at the heart of everything we do.
- To lead, enable and collaborate with partners to achieve better outcomes for Ipswich.
- To use data and insight to drive better outcomes.
- To have a diverse, skilled, empowered, and customer centred workforce.
- To provide accessible digital services.
- To take transparent decisions which make a real difference to our community.



About Ipswich

Ipswich is the county town of Suffolk, located on the estuary of the river Orwell. Ipswich has a growing commercial, ICT, business and financial services sector and is home to the University of Suffolk. Ipswich has a significant port and is known for its maritime history and waterfront.

Ipswich has a population of 139,642 and a young age profile, with 19% of the population aged under 15 and 65% aged 16-64 years. It is predicted that the population will decrease to 135,816 by 2043 and that the age profile will remain similar, but with a decrease in those under 65, and an increase in those 65+. Most Ipswich residents live in single family households (couples with or without children, or single parents with children).

There are 62,080 homes in Ipswich (2023) with an increase of around 1,267 homes between 2018 and 2023. The most common housing tenure types are owned with or without a mortgage (55.4%),

privately rented accommodation (22.9%) and social rented accommodation (20.8%).

Ipswich Borough Council is one of a limited number of Local Authorities who have retained their housing stock, currently owning 7,875 properties. This consists of 566 sheltered accommodation units, 4,624 houses and bungalows, 3,202 maisonettes and 49 bedsits. The Council also owns 66 homeless family accommodation units. At the end of 2023 all Council properties met the Decent Homes Standard and 85% met the higher Ipswich Standard.

Around 85% of the population of working age in Ipswich were employed. Of those employed, 77% are employed full-time and 22% part-time. Of those who are of working age, 20% are in receipt of Universal Credit.

Ipswich was the 71st most deprived Local Authority according to 2019 rankings, meaning it was within the top 25%. Life expectancy in Ipswich is 82.6 years for females and 78.6 years for males, which is similar to the average for England.



Since 2018 and the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, and then the 'Everyone In' policy during the Covid pandemic in 2020, the Council has seen changes to the number of prevention, relief, and main duties accepted. Approaches for homelessness advice and assistance have increased by 52%, however, duties accepted to prevent homelessness have decreased by 13%, and accepted relief duties have also decreased by 19%. However, prevention duties owed to single/one-person male households specifically have increased from 30% of all total prevention duties in 2018/19 to 43% in 2023/24. On the other hand, prevention duties for single parents with dependent children, and for couples with and without dependent children have decreased. The number of main duties accepted decreased slightly from 12% in 2018/2019 to 9% in 2023/24. This suggests that in general households in need of homelessness assistance are approaching the Housing Options team at an earlier stage when effective advice can be given, and no duty is yet owed.

It also seems that the prevention and relief work being carried out is effective, as evidenced by the decrease in relief and main duty acceptances. However, this data also highlights the increase in demand from single/one-person male households for homelessness assistance.

Key legislation

The table below outlines the central legislation that is referred to within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Appendix 3, section 1 contains further details of the legislation that guides our work.

The Housing Act 1996 & the Homelessness Act 2002 includes part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 which is the primary legislation regarding preventing homelessness and assisting households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homeless (Priority need for accommodation) (England) order 2002 was introduced to ensure a more strategic approach and extended the priority need categories to include more vulnerable groups.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed additional duties on Local Authorities to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness and extended the requirement to aid those without a “priority need”. It extended the prevention duty to begin 56 days prior to the threat of homelessness and introduced an additional 56-day relief duty when a household becomes homeless.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance sets out how Local Authorities should operate their homelessness functions in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 amended Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to provide a new definition for domestic abuse and more support for victims. It extended the priority need category to all eligible victims who are homeless because of domestic abuse.

The Renters' Rights Bill aims to improve the experience of private renting by giving renters more security and stability. It aims to achieve this through several measures including abolishing Section 21 evictions, introducing a new Private Landlord Ombudsman, strengthening Local Authority enforcement, and applying the Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law to the sector.



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The local and national context

Appendix 3, Sections 2 and 3, contains a list of the important influences on the national and local context of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The table below describes the key considerations referred to within this strategy.

The local context
The Ipswich Borough Council Corporate Strategy "Proud of Ipswich: Championing our community and revitalising our town" (outlined on page 6) was adopted in 2023. The Cornhill Strategy sets out how the Council will transform the Cornhill in Ipswich to further support the priority of having "a thriving town centre".
The Ipswich Borough Council Housing Strategy 2025 - 2030 describes our plans to meet the housing needs of the residents of Ipswich.
The Ipswich Borough Council Digital Strategy outlines how we will use digital services and take opportunities to transform our service delivery to meet our community's needs.
The Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy describes how social housing is allocated across the Gateway area.
The Ipswich Borough Council Domestic Abuse Policy outlines the Council's commitment to Council tenants, leaseholders, temporary licensees, and occupants to take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse.
Suffolk Health and Housing Needs Assessment provides an analysis of the effect of housing on the health of Suffolk residents and makes recommendations to guide future work across the Suffolk system. The Health and Housing Needs Assessment 2024 recommends that the Suffolk Housing Board lead the development of a "Housing Health Audit" to address housing health hazards, with a focus on private rented accommodation where housing condition tends to be worse. Additionally, to strengthen links between health, public health, communities and the Suffolk Office of Data and Analytics (SODA).
Suffolk Housing Board comprises Local Authorities within Suffolk working together towards the shared vision that "all residents in Suffolk lead independent, healthier lives through the supply of affordable, quality homes which provide choice within sustainable communities".

The national context
The Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018) set out a plan and commitment to end rough sleeping by 2027, by supporting those rough sleeping to move off the street and into a home.
Ending Rough Sleeping for Good (2022) updated the Rough Sleeping Strategy introducing principles of prevention, intervention, recovery, and a joined-up approach. It provided a definition for the goal to end rough sleeping as "preventing it wherever possible, and where it cannot be prevented, making it rare, brief and non-recurring". Local Authorities were provided with government funding to develop their rough sleeping initiatives and to achieve this.
The "Everyone In" Initiative ensured that those rough sleeping were safely accommodated during the Coronavirus pandemic declared by the World Health Organisation in March 2020.
Refugee schemes: The Homes for Ukraine Scheme allowed UK residents to sponsor Ukrainian nationals and their families and to provide them with refuge from the war following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The scheme provided three-year visas which provided full access to public services, benefits, and support. The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) assists those who supported the UK's efforts in Afghanistan and vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk. The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme assists qualifying Afghan nationals who have worked with the UK government to relocate to the UK.
National housing shortages are a result of current housing supply in England falling short of what is deemed necessary to ensure all residents are living in suitable, safe, and secure housing. To address this issue, all Local Authorities in England will be given updated mandatory housing targets to meet the national ambition of 1.5 million additional homes. This will have an impact on the Council's services and new housing provision across the borough.
Economic pressures have been having a significant effect on UK residents since the end of 2021 due to a fall in disposable income caused by higher inflation and low wage growth. This negatively affects the ability of households to pay for goods, services, and essential bills such as food, heating, and housing costs. This has been further impacted by the war in Ukraine and the increased cost of energy.
Public services including Local Authorities, mental health services, and social care, are experiencing the effects of national challenges such as reduced budgets and increased demand in relation to the provision of good quality services.

Introduction

Tackling homelessness is extremely important to the Council. Access to suitable housing, and the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping, are essential for people and communities to thrive. In recent times, due to pressures such as those caused by the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, households who in the less challenging economic times of the recent past may not have struggled, have found themselves facing housing difficulties. In addition, there is high demand and limited supply of temporary accommodation, lack of specialist accommodation for applicants with complex needs, and a buoyant private rented sector. This strategy aims to ensure there is no stigma attached to needing help and to provide the framework for anyone affected to seek meaningful support.

Against the backdrop of a national housing crisis, the government enacted the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) in 2018, extending duties on Local Authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness at an earlier stage, and to ensure there was help and support for single/one-person households. Indeed, we have seen an increase in demand from single/one-person households, particularly from single male households. Approaches to the Housing Options team for assistance have increased, however, fewer people have been owed a prevention or relief duty suggesting that households are receiving valuable advice earlier, while they are not yet owed a duty. Prevention and relief duties have been less successful due to the challenging housing market and lack of available affordable housing for low wage households. During the last five years the Council has seen the Housing Options team grow and diversify to not only meet the requirements of the Act, but to deliver on the needs of the local community.



In 2018, with rising rough sleeping numbers and an exceptionally cold winter, the government produced the Ending Rough Sleeping Strategy with the ambition to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. This strategy was backed by the Rough Sleeping Initiative with funding available to qualifying authorities through a bidding process, to build a range of interventions for rough sleepers, specific to the needs of the local area. Ipswich responded with a successful partnership that has delivered over £4.4 million of funded interventions since 2018 and has worked with over 1,800 people to move away from the street or prevent rough sleeping from occurring.

The HRA introduced a statutory duty on Local Authorities to review homelessness in their districts and formulate a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. The Council produced Ipswich's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024 with four priorities.

- ✓ Prevention of homelessness.
- ✓ Increasing access to suitable accommodation.
- ✓ Supporting vulnerable households to secure and maintain accommodation.
- ✓ Tackling rough sleeping.



The Council has reviewed the outcomes from the last five years and reflected on the current challenges and opportunities to create the priorities for the next five years.

This Strategy sets out the actions the Council will be carrying out and what can be either enabled or influenced by working with other agencies. There is a plain English version of the strategy for those who prefer to read a more concise version. This strategy is supported by a range of documents including the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan (appendix 1), Ipswich Homelessness Review (appendix 2), The Local and National Context (appendix 3) and the Consultation Report (appendix 4).






Key Facts




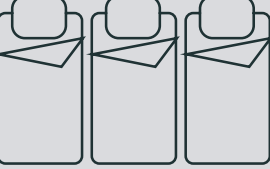
about homelessness and rough sleeping in Ipswich

<p>2022/23:</p> <p>1,883 approaches for housing advice, of which:</p> <p>785 (42%) were assessed as owed a prevention duty.</p> <p>333 (18%) were assessed as owed a relief duty.</p> <p>64% of those owed a relief or prevention duty were one person households.</p>	<p>2022/23:</p> <p>27% of households owed a prevention duty were at risk of homelessness due to family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate.</p> <p>34% of households owed a relief duty were homeless due to family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate.</p>	<p>2023/24:</p> <p>209 households prevented from becoming homeless by assisting them to remain in their existing home.</p> <p>315 households prevented from becoming homeless by assisting them to obtain alternative accommodation.</p>
<p>2022/23:</p> <p>50% of households accepted as homeless were in priority need due to having dependent children.</p> <p>12% of households accepted as homeless were in priority need due to being vulnerable because of physical ill health or disability.</p>	<p>Households in temporary accommodation:</p> <p>2021: 52 (20 with children)</p> <p>2022: 62 (25 with children)</p> <p>2023: 49 (26 with children)</p> <p>2024: 55 (23 with children)</p>	<p>Number of rough sleepers in Ipswich:</p> <p>2018: 11</p> <p>2019: 7</p> <p>2020: 9</p> <p>2021: 3</p> <p>2022: 9</p> <p>2023: 5</p>

 <p>2022/2025: Rough Sleeping Initiative grant funding:</p> <p>£1,749,100</p>	<p>2024: Rough Sleeping Initiative interventions:</p> <p>10 STEP beds.</p> <p>23 Housing First tenancies.</p> <p>3 Navigators.</p> <p>1 Outreach.</p> <p>1 Inreach.</p> <p>1 Senior mental health practitioner.</p> <p>4 Housing First support workers.</p>	<p>2022/23: Supported housing:</p> <p>830 applications were made for supported housing.</p> <p>263 (32%) were successful in obtaining placements.</p>
<p>2023/24: Gateway to Homechoice:</p> <p>719 lets in Ipswich.</p> <p>195 (27%) of those were to homeless households.</p>	 <p>2022/23: Spend to save:</p> <p>133 households assisted.</p>	<p>2022/23: LET Schemes.</p> <p>27 households assisted through the Rent Guarantee Scheme.</p> <p>26 households assisted through the Deposit Bond Scheme.</p> <p>2 households assisted through the Landlord Security Scheme.</p>

Our achievements

 <p>Fully implemented the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</p>	<p>Processed 4,129 applications to Gateway to Homechoice and shortlisted 100% of properties owned by the Council within 24 hours during 2023/24.</p>	 <p>Expanded the Housing Options team to include a financial inclusion officer, a criminal justice link worker and a domestic abuse link worker.</p>
 <p>LET achieved 27 Rent Guarantee Scheme tenancies in a challenging private rental market and collected 94% of rent during 2022/23.</p>	<p>Continued to develop strong relationships with partner agencies such as Suffolk County Council Children's and Adult services, NHS teams, Suffolk Constabulary, National Probation Service, and develop effective pathways for vulnerable groups.</p>	 <p>Activated SWEP beds during periods of severe weather, maximising the use of Rough Sleeping Initiative beds to keep homeless people safe.</p>
<p>Achieved an overnight rough sleeping count of 5 in November 2023, keeping numbers low despite a national increase.</p>	<p>In 2023/24: 66% of prevention duties ended with accommodation being secured. 35% of relief duties ended with accommodation being secured.</p>	 <p>Made use of Household Support Funding and the Spend to Save fund to prevent homelessness.</p>

<p>Expanded the Housing First Scheme to meet the needs of the most complex homeless people from 4 tenancies in 2018 to 23 in 2024.</p>	 <p>Secured funding to continue the mental health practitioner post within the Rough Sleeping Project, negotiating with Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust.</p>	 <p>Recruited a policy and strategy officer and a new performance and project officer to analyse data across the service and improve on service delivery.</p>
<p>Proactively worked with chaotic and complex needs households.</p>	 <p>Worked with 380 individuals throughout 2023/24 to move away from or prevent rough sleeping.</p>	<p>Further developed and expanded the schemes offered under Ipswich LET to access the private rented sector.</p>
<p>Developed a specialist navigator role within the Rough Sleeping Project to work with non-UK nationals and those out of area.</p>	 <p>Developed and opened a new temporary accommodation unit offering rooms for single homeless people in priority need.</p>	<p>The Rough Sleeping Project obtained and delivered on £686,569 grant funding from DLUHC (MHCLG) Rough Sleeping Initiative during 2023/24 and gained additional funding to tackle rough sleeping and expand the project.</p>

The challenges

Ten of the challenges we face to deliver high quality housing advice services.

01 Affordable accommodation.

The availability of suitable and affordable accommodation.

02 Welfare reform.

The impact of welfare reform measures on claimant's ability to secure and maintain accommodation.

03 High demand on social housing.

Demands on social housing supply remain high and are greater than what is available.

04 Funding cuts within supported housing.

Funding cuts for supported housing provision for single/one-person households with support and care needs increase pressure on housing advice services.

05 Time-limited government funding.

The time-limited nature of government funding for homelessness prevention services creates uncertainty.

06 Wider health and social issues that contribute to homelessness.

Issues such as health inequalities and lack of access to gainful employment within the community contribute to households requiring homelessness services.

07 Uncertainty around Rough Sleeping Project funding.

Government funding for the Rough Sleeping Initiative currently runs until 2025, with uncertainty regarding future funding arrangements.

08 High demand for accommodation for single households.

Demand on more affordable accommodation for single/one person households, including private rented HMO's and one-bed properties through Gateway to Homechoice is high.

09 Increase in approaches from care leavers.

There has been a significant increase in the need to support care leavers with housing after leaving care, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

10 Financial pressures on public services.

There has been an increase in pressure on public service finances, including Local Authorities, along with greater demand which impacts on homelessness services.

Our strategic priorities

Our strategy is built around five 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 challenges we face to prevent homelessness.

Our priorities

01 Provide a high-quality advice service.

02 Focus on early prevention.

03 Work with our partners to end rough sleeping.

04 Facilitate access to suitable accommodation.

05 Build and maintain partnerships that support residents.

22 Priority 01:

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.

High-quality housing advice

Advice services can empower people by enabling them to make informed choices around their housing options and give realistic information on accessing suitable housing. Social housing remains in very high demand which far exceeds supply, and the cost of private rented accommodation can be a barrier. Therefore, maximising income and preventing debt is vital.

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.

During 2022/23, 54% of prevention duties and 31% of relief duties ended in a successful outcome. This was a reduction compared to the previous year, reflecting the challenging national housing picture. However, the number of households whose prevention duty ended in homelessness was much lower in Ipswich than is the case nationally. Data analysis also suggests that more households are approaching the Council for assistance at an earlier stage and fewer prevention and relief duties are being accepted, suggesting that the advice being provided is effective. We will continue to build on our success in assisting households to secure accommodation and bring homelessness duties to an end with positive outcomes. To achieve this, we will use data insights to identify the specific factors impacting on housing need and target our resources accordingly.

An accessible service

The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to meet the requirement of the public sector equality duty when creating policies and designing services, by considering the needs of service users who are disadvantaged due to having a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation). 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. The Ipswich Borough Council Digital Strategy outlines the Council's commitment to delivering inclusive digital services and to tackle digital exclusion. We will design our services with our residents and ensure they are easy to use.

Supporting vulnerable residents

We will work with our partners to support vulnerable residents 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 abuse), who have left the care system, who are institutionalised having recently left prison or the armed forces, Gypsies and Travellers and older people. We want to improve access to housing for older people and people with disabilities. We will ensure that support is timely and easy to access.

Mental health

The most common support need of households owed a prevention or relief duty in 2022/23 was having mental health problems (15%). It is important to us that we continue to support residents who have mental health problems and are homeless or threatened with homelessness. To achieve this, we secured ring-fenced funding for a mental health practitioner working within the Rough Sleeping Project. Specialist mental health beds are provided by Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust.

Physical health

We must continue to ensure that our service is accessible for applicants with disabilities and that suitable accommodation is available. Of households owed a prevention or relief duty, 8% (2022/23) had a support need relating to physical ill health and disability. We will continue to support applicants to access the Disabled Facilities Grant for adaptations where appropriate to prevent and relieve homelessness. We will ensure that those applicants who need adapted properties through Gateway to Homechoice are awarded the relevant priority for rehousing.

Discharge from institutions

It is important that we continue to provide support to residents who face the threat of homelessness upon leaving institutions such as prison or the hospital, to access accommodation at these times when they are most vulnerable. We have obtained funding for a hospital link worker for patients with complex illness that require stable accommodation during treatment plans.

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24 Criminal justice

It is important that ex-offenders can access housing and specialised support to reduce re-offending. We have a specialist criminal justice link worker who works alongside our criminal justice colleagues to support this group into accommodation. This role is funded by the National Probation Service to provide advice to ex-offenders within the criminal justice system. The role was introduced as a pilot and will be evaluated; however, it appears to be delivering positive outcomes.

Care leavers

The Housing Act 1996 and the Childrens Act 1989 both outline duties towards young people leaving care, and therefore both Suffolk County Council and Ipswich Borough Council have a duty towards care leavers. To address these overlapping duties a joint protocol has been developed.

Despite various measures and partnership working with Suffolk County Council leaving care team, we have seen an increase in the number of care leavers (particularly unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) presenting as homeless to Ipswich when they reach 18. Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, care leavers can present as homeless to any Local Authority where they have a local connection to the relevant county council. Ipswich receives a higher number of presentations from this group than the surrounding rural Local Authority areas which could be due to the high number of services located within the town. For this cohort the transition to independent living and navigating areas such as financial management and maintaining a home is often a challenge. We will continue to work with Suffolk County Council and our partners to address the needs of this vulnerable group to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Domestic abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 amended Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to provide a new definition for domestic abuse and more support for those affected. It extended the priority need category to all those who are eligible and homeless because of domestic abuse. Individuals experiencing domestic abuse are often forced to flee their homes and the Local Authority where they have been living due to safety concerns. We have introduced a domestic abuse link worker role to provide specialised support to applicants fleeing domestic abuse. This role was introduced as a pilot and will be evaluated; however, feedback has been extremely positive in terms of the effectiveness in delivering successful outcomes.



LGBTIQ+

Individuals who are LGBTIQ+ are more likely to be homeless or be insecurely housed than those who are not, particularly young people. They can face discrimination and abuse, which puts them at higher risk of developing substance misuse and mental health issues. Individuals who are LGBTIQ+ may also have specific needs which are sometimes not understood. These issues can delay support being sought and lead to their situation deteriorating further before seeking help. We are reviewing our data collection processes to make sure that we are capturing household characteristic data, including regarding sexual orientation and gender, as accurately as possible. We require that all our staff are well trained in relation to equality and diversity, however we want to make sure our staff are trained to the highest standards to understand and support all our residents, including individuals from the LGBTIQ+ community.

Refugees

Approaches from refugees to the Housing Options team have remained generally very low, however there has been a sharp increase in relief duties accepted for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children during 2024. We want to continue working in partnership with the agencies who provide specialised support to these groups to prevent homelessness, ensuring that assistance is shared equitably between agencies and Local Authorities within the county.

To ensure we provide a high-quality advice service, 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. Listen and learn 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.

26 **Priority 02:** **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.

Effective homelessness prevention

Homelessness is disruptive, costly, and distressing whatever the circumstances with often time being spent in temporary accommodation. It is known that the earlier prevention measures are delivered, the more effective they are likely to be. We will work to identify and engage those at risk of homelessness at the earliest opportunity, to maximise successful outcomes. We will use data and technology to assist us to identify emerging need and adapt our services accordingly. We will use data to inform and, with our partners, work to target the underlying issues that can lead to homelessness before they develop, such as health issues and access to education and employment opportunities. Households can experience repeat homelessness. This can be for many reasons, including unmet support needs and financial difficulties. We must continue to work with our partners to address these issues to prevent the cycle of homelessness from occurring.

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 intervene earlier. 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 can best assist everyone who needs them. We want to build upon our homelessness prevention measures to target the early prevention of homelessness.

The Duty to Refer

We will continue to develop effective partnership working to facilitate successful early homelessness prevention. Services can (and some are legally required to) refer service users who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days to the Housing Options team through the Duty to Refer mechanism. We want to continue to build on relationships and processes to ensure all agencies are using the Duty to Refer where appropriate, and opportunities to prevent homelessness are maximised.

Empty homes

Bringing empty homes back in use increases the availability of housing and can help to prevent homelessness. Issues such as disrepair can cause properties to become uninhabitable and households to become homeless. Legal disputes and complex probate can mean that properties can stay empty for years.

The Council follows our Empty Homes Policy and Empty Homes Toolkit to reduce empty homes in Ipswich. Measures in place include increased rates of council tax, advice, and signposting to our private rented team, Ipswich LET. We engage with and support property owners using our enforcement powers where necessary to prevent houses falling into disrepair and to bring empty homes back into use. During 2023/24, the Private Sector Housing team returned 20 empty properties to use. We must continue to explore how we can prevent and reduce empty homes to ensure we are making best use of our resources to prevent homelessness.



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To focus on early prevention, 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** Work with our partners to further develop processes and deliver interventions to prevent homelessness early.

28 **Priority 03:**

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.

Preventing rough sleeping

Rough sleeping is the most visible and dangerous form of homelessness and the longer someone experiences rough sleeping the more likely it is they will face challenges and complex issues. We aim, where possible, to relieve and prevent rough sleeping by working with all relevant partners and agencies within Ipswich. This is key to reducing and ending the time someone spends on the streets.

The Rough Sleeping Project

The introduction of the government's Rough Sleeping Initiative in 2018 reduced the numbers rough sleeping in Ipswich and nationally. The numbers were further reduced in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic and the introduction of the government's "Everyone In" initiative which ensured rough sleepers were safely accommodated. However, where the numbers rough sleeping nationally have increased since, in Ipswich they have reduced.

We share the government's vision for this priority to ensure rough sleeping is "prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur that it is rare, brief, and non-recurrent". The government's ambitions as set out within its Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 and the subsequent Ending Rough Sleeping for Good Strategy 2022, are supported by various streams of funding. For 2024/25, Ipswich has achieved £546,082 in Rough Sleeping Initiative grant funding, in addition to "top up funding" that is received for use on individual projects. It is currently unknown what the funding arrangements will be after this time. The Suffolk Housing Board commissioned a report on developing a system approach to preventing rough sleeping ahead of the end of the current funding arrangements in 2025. Recommendations included focussing on early prevention/upstream prevention measures that enable residents to maintain their accommodation and taking a Suffolk wide system approach to addressing homelessness. We will consider the recommendations as we formulate our future plans for how we will deliver our services.

Our knowledge and data insights indicate that substance misuse and mental health issues are common support needs of individuals rough sleeping. To support individuals with substance misuse issues, we work closely with local drug and alcohol services on early intervention and to establish quick responses to the most chaotic clients. The senior mental health practitioner within the Rough Sleeping Project provides individuals with mental health support.

To address the specific needs of vulnerable women who rough sleep, we work closely with all relevant agencies including the police, probation, and the Health Outreach Project to put in place a multi-agency approach. This includes working with adult social care and using short-term emergency beds as a main off-the-street offer to women. In addition, the Ipswich supported housing pathway that is being developed includes the provision of women-only beds to meet this need.

We work with our partners to support ex-service personnel who are rough sleeping. Ex-service personnel are given additional preference for social housing through Gateway to Homechoice, although in Ipswich numbers presenting as homeless and with this priority are low. Proposed changes to local connection criteria could mean that UK armed forces veterans will be exempt from local connection criteria for social housing.

The Target Priority Group (TPG)

The TPG is an identified group of people that experience long-term and cyclical rough sleeping within the Borough. We record the number of times an individual is found rough sleeping, as well as those who return after 180 days. We identified 21 individuals who fit specific TPG criteria set out by DLUHC (now MHCLG) and are required to report their rough sleeping activities. This is a new process; however, the resulting data will enable us to have a better understanding of the needs of this group which we can consider when designing our services.

30 **Rough Sleeping Project interventions**

Within the Rough Sleeping Project, we deliver multiple interventions to relieve and prevent rough sleeping that include support and accommodation-based services. Each intervention is described below with a case study to illustrate each one.

Rough sleeping coordinator: coordinates the project and all relevant partners delivering interventions by ensuring we deliver on our contract.	Provider: Ipswich Borough Council.
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Rough sleeper outreach: engages rough sleepers to establish a reason why an individual is rough sleeping in Ipswich and to refer and/or offer support as appropriate.	Provider: Ipswich Borough Council & Ipswich Housing Action Group.
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CASE STUDY:

Mrs A has a complex history and high support needs. After losing her accommodation, she was on the streets and very vulnerable. Outreach visited her and engaged with her every day, but she refused support. Outreach did not give up and continued to offer support. Eventually, she agreed and was provided with accommodation. However, sadly, she eventually returned to the streets. Outreach and all other agencies continue to offer support and engage with Mrs A to find the right solution for her.

In-reach: support individuals with a history of rough sleeping from returning to the streets.	Provider: Ipswich Borough Council & Ipswich Housing Action Group.
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CASE STUDY:

Mr E was at risk of losing his social housing tenancy due to anti-social behaviour from a few regular guests that he had. He would often engage with Health Outreach and stated that he did not want to return to his accommodation as he could not cope with the issues. In-reach contacted Mr E to offer support to deal with his tenancy issues, which he accepted. In-reach liaised with the police, the mental health practitioner, and Health Outreach to support Mr E and resolve his tenancy issues. This work prevented Mr E from returning to the streets and enabled him to enjoy living in his flat again.

Rough sleeper navigators (2 X FTE): work with the most complex and hard to house individuals, supporting from the streets through to accommodation.	Provider: Ipswich Borough Council.
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CASE STUDY:

Miss B was rough sleeping and too scared to engage with anyone, but a navigator gained her trust and worked to find her suitable off-the-street accommodation. She was eventually housed with Emmaus, but struggled there, and her navigator found her alternative accommodation, which suited her needs better. After several months, she moved to supported accommodation and is doing well.

Mental health practitioner: engages with complex rough sleepers and other vulnerable people to prevent rough sleeping and provide various interventions.	Provider: Norfolk & Suffolk Foundation Trust.
CASE STUDY: <i>Mrs C was sleeping rough due to being in an abusive relationship and having complex needs. She was found by outreach regularly and her drug use was causing paranoia and irrational behaviour. The police feared for her safety and that of others. The senior mental health practitioner engaged with her, and she began to address her mental health issues and accessed accommodation. Intense work and medication saw her drug use decline and led to positive changes. She moved into Next Steps accommodation and worked on her personal goals with her tenancy support worker. She has now moved into her own permanent home, is employed, and lives independently.</i>	

Rough sleeper emergency beds (RSEB): four emergency beds that partners can refer into once we identify a rough sleeper.	Provider: Anglia Care Trust (ACT).
CASE STUDY: <i>Mr G was on the streets for many months following an eviction due to high-risk behaviour, and there were concerns that he would not survive on the streets much longer. Housing providers were reluctant to give him a second chance, but we worked with ACT, and he was offered an RSEB and multi-agency wrap-around support. His problematic behaviour continued but we carried on working with ACT to prevent his eviction. Staying in an RSEB kept him alive, and after 8 months he moved into a Housing First tenancy.</i>	

Next steps accommodation programme (NSAP) (1 x FTE): 10 self-contained units, 8 at Armitage Place and 2 at Civic Drive.	Provider: Ipswich Borough Council.
CASE STUDY: <i>Mr I was rough sleeping in his car. He was very worried about being in RSI accommodation due to other residents using drugs and alcohol. He was offered his own self-contained unit at Armitage Place with support and was happy to be there. After two years he started to bid on Gateway to Homechoice and finally obtained a social housing tenancy. He is now volunteering and working towards getting back into employment.</i>	
Rough sleeper prevention beds: four prevention of rough sleeping beds for individuals that need accommodation.	Provider: Anglia Care Trust (ACT).
CASE STUDY: <i>Mr F was given notice on his current accommodation and would not engage with anyone. To prevent a return to rough sleeping we were able to offer him a prevention bed within the RSI, and he was happy to take this. It enabled him to receive support, and after a short while he was able to move on and access a privately rented room.</i>	
Short term emergency provision bed (STEP): ten beds over two locations in Ipswich, where residents are provided with a high level of support.	Provider: Anglia Care Trust (ACT).
CASE STUDY: <i>Mr H had been homeless for over 7 years, either living on the streets of Ipswich or in prison. He was using excessive amounts of drugs and alcohol and suffering with severe mental health issues. He was seen talking to himself in the town centre, which raised concerns. In November 2022, he was discussed at the weekly Rough Sleeper Working Group. He was offered a room in a STEP bed and received treatment for his drug and alcohol use and support from the mental health practitioner.</i>	

Rough sleeper navigator reconnections specialist: engages with non-UK nationals to support with overcoming obstacles preventing them from accessing work, housing, public funds, and any other support they require.	Provider: Ipswich Borough Council.
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CASE STUDY:

Mr D was rough sleeping and had not received European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) status from the Home Office. He was not able to access public funds, was unable to secure accommodation, and was in poor health. The reconnections navigator worked hard to get the Home Office to look at his application, and with an immigration lawyer they were able to submit the information needed. After many months he was awarded settled status which enabled us to offer Mr D off-the-street accommodation.

Housing First (HF): offers the most complex, hard to house rough sleepers secure permanent housing and tailored wrap-around support from multiple agencies. Four tenancy support workers work with 22 tenants and 8 individuals on the waiting list.	Provider: Support workers are provided by Ipswich Borough Council and Anglia Care Trust. Tenancies are provided by Anglia Care Trust, Ipswich Borough Council, Orwell Housing, Newtide Homes, and Sanctuary.
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CASE STUDY:

Mr J was an entrenched rough sleeper, causing issues on the street due to his criminal behaviour. Due to drug use and volatile behaviour, he struggled to hold on to accommodation. He eventually began to trust one of the navigators and accepted an offer of short-term accommodation and support with his drug use from Turning Point. He engaged with support, moved to NSAP accommodation, and eventually into a permanent home he is very proud of. He says "Thanks for your support, you always pick me up when I am struggling... I really appreciate what you do for me. It means a lot."

To continue to work with our partners to end rough sleeping in Ipswich, we will:

- **Aim 1** Work with partners to deliver joined-up services for the most vulnerable.
- **Aim 2** Make an off-the-street accommodation 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, trends, and 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. Deliver 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, inclusive, and 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.

36 **Priority 04:**

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.

Assistance to secure and maintain accommodation

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. In recent years there have been numerous additional challenges to this, including the national housing crisis and economic pressures. The severe national shortage of social housing combined with the high costs of privately renting and high mortgage rates in addition to low incomes, in comparison to the increasing costs of essentials such as bills and food, have increased poverty within Ipswich. These challenging conditions have had an impact on landlords as well; indeed, the second biggest and increasing reason for prevention duties being accepted in Ipswich between 2019/20 and 2022/23 was the landlord serving notice due to selling or reletting their property. This has made it increasingly challenging for households to achieve decent and affordable housing arrangements. We will continue to develop our offer to best meet housing need in this challenging climate.

Approaches for homelessness assistance have increased overall (2018/19: 1,242 and 2023/24: 1,883), including for single/one-person households. In 2018/19, 30% of those owed a prevention duty and 52% of those owed a relief duty were single males, whereas 21% and 20.5% were single females, respectively. In 2023/24, this increased to 43% for single men owed a prevention duty and remained 52% for single men owed a relief duty. For women, these numbers remained similar in 2023/24 (21% for both duties). Our data insights indicate that most single males who were owed a prevention duty were aged 25-34. Most single males who were owed a relief duty were aged 35-44. It is therefore important that we consider the housing needs of single households and ensure we have sufficient hostel, bedsit, and one-bed accommodation. This is also highlighted within the Ipswich Housing Strategy 2025-30.

We assist residents to maintain their accommodation wherever appropriate in many ways. We do this through cross-team working with the Tenancy Services and Environmental Health teams, to ensure residents can live in good quality homes. We work with the anti-social behaviour officer within the Community Safety team

where required. In addition, we work with our partners to ensure landlords and tenants are aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding private rented accommodation. The Renters' Rights Bill outlines changes to private rented sector to give tenants more stability, improve conditions and strengthen tenants' rights, including offering greater protections against illegal eviction.

We recognise the importance of specialised money advice and continue to assist applicants to access this from both within our service and externally where it is needed. The most common reason that households lost their accommodation between 2019 and 2023 was due to their friends and family no longer being able to accommodate them. We will explore measures to address this, such as family mediation.

Financial assistance measures

We have a range of financial measures available to assist households at risk of homelessness, such as financial help with deposits, rent in advance and rent arrears. We want to make the best use of these measures, including Spend to Save, the Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) wherever appropriate. There are many assistance measures available from other sources outside of our service such as the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme that we can support residents to access. We will continue to evaluate and adapt the assistance measures we provide to ensure we continue to make best use of the funding that is available to us.

Ipswich LET

Due to the increased pressures on the housing market and on social housing, private rented accommodation provides an important, usually more timely solution to meet housing need. We will continue to assist households to secure private rented accommodation through Ipswich Borough Council's private lettings team, the Lettings Experience Team (Ipswich LET). Ipswich LET has expanded in recent years and has introduced new roles including a tenancy support officer. We will continue to build upon the successes of Ipswich LET by continuing to develop schemes to assist applicants. We recognise that many households experience difficulties accessing the private rented market due to adverse housing market conditions, and we will need to keep our schemes under review and adapt to meet the needs of applicants. Assisting households to secure private rented self-contained accommodation is the most common accommodation solution to end prevention duties in Ipswich. However, despite this, national data suggests that it is an area where we can build further upon our successes and assist more households into private rented self-contained accommodation.

38 Gateway to Homechoice

The allocation of registered provider and Council accommodation operates through the Gateway to Homechoice, Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme. In 2023/24, there were 719 properties let through CBL, 195 of those were to households under homelessness duties. In 2023/24 there were 2,776 active applications as of 1st April, of those 4% were in a band A, 20% were in a band B, and 27% were in a band C. The demand for social housing is high and cannot meet the housing needs of all Ipswich residents. We must therefore utilise other types of accommodation to meet housing need. The Council wants to build more Council homes and encourage more house builders to build more affordable housing as well, as set out in our Corporate Strategy, to enable more households to obtain social housing.

Supported housing

The current funding arrangements through Suffolk County Council for the Housing Related Support service which funds supported housing in Ipswich is due to end by March 2025. We will work to minimise the impact of this on our residents and continue to develop an Ipswich pathway for supported housing, so that applicants with support needs can continue to access suitable accommodation.

Temporary accommodation

The Council has faced growing pressure on availability of suitable temporary accommodation in Ipswich in recent years, and despite further extending the provision of council owned temporary accommodation for single/one-person homeless households, this pressure continues to grow. The homelessness data review for this strategy showed that significantly more households were accommodated in Council-run temporary accommodation for homeless households rather than nightly paid, private sector, Local Authority or housing association accommodation that is often used nationally. In addition, households in Ipswich had significantly shorter stays in temporary accommodation than is the case nationally. We want to continue to build on our success and provide good quality temporary accommodation for our residents who need it. We recognise that as the pressures on our temporary accommodation continue to grow we must adapt to ensure we can continue to meet the temporary accommodation needs of our residents. We will continue to work collaboratively across departments and with our partners to share expertise and resources in line with our Temporary Accommodation Policy.



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To continue to facilitate access to suitable accommodation, 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 single/one-person households.
- **Aim 8** Explore funding opportunities for specific groups, including refugees and rough sleepers.

40 **Priority 05:**

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 Suffolk system

The network of partners working collaboratively and strategically 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 strategic and collaborative relationships, to enable the most successful outcomes for residents requiring 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.

We will continue to work closely with Suffolk County Council as well as Suffolk Local Authorities to overcome challenges and share resources where appropriate to meet mutual aims. We will continue to work as part of Suffolk Housing Board towards enabling all Suffolk residents to have a better quality of life through the provision of good quality and affordable housing. We must ensure our relationships with registered providers are as strong as they are with the Tenancy Services team to ensure that social housing tenants benefit equally from effective partnership working. We want to build on our relationships with social services and mental health services to ensure that applicants with complex needs have access to accommodation that best meets their needs.



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To continue to build and maintain partnerships that support residents, 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 single/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.

Delivering our strategy

We will fulfil our priorities through achieving the aims that we have set out in this strategy. The strategy is supported by a live action plan that details how we will meet each aim and continually evolves to meet our aims and priorities (appendix 1). Our actions will be prioritised to make sure we meet the most important aims in a timely way. We will review our progress in achieving the aims and actions internally through regular monitoring meetings, elected members, the Corporate Management Team (CMT), housing panels and internal audit and scrutiny processes. In addition, we are committed to involving our partners in the continual review of our strategy.

Consultation and feedback

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was developed in collaboration with colleagues representing the Housing Options team, Accommodation team, Rough Sleeping Project, the private lettings team (Ipswich LET) and the Policy team. This group worked together as the strategy steering group to create this strategy.

A task and finish group was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which reviewed the outcomes of the previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, explored the data insights that informed the strategy and provided feedback on the consultation documents. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy has been developed in line with feedback from this group.

The Corporate Management Team provided feedback which was incorporated into the public consultation documents and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.



On Friday, the 16th of February 2024, Ipswich Borough Council hosted a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy consultation with stakeholders. The feedback provided supported the proposed priorities and helped with the development of the aims and actions.

A four-week public consultation was held between the 17th of September and the 15th of October 2024. The results of the consultation strongly supported the proposed priorities and aims for the strategy. The consultation report can be found in appendix 4.

Glossary of abbreviations and terms

Accommodation team: manages applications to the housing register under a Choice Based Lettings Scheme, operating in partnership with authorities across Suffolk and Essex as part of the Gateway to Homechoice Scheme. The team also manages temporary accommodation lettings.

Affordable housing: social rented, shared ownership, intermediate housing and starter homes for households who cannot afford to meet their housing needs through the market.

Applicant: an individual who approaches the Local Authority for homelessness assistance.

Approaches: contacting the Local Authority to ask for homelessness assistance.

Benchmarking: compare performance against other Local Authorities to share best practice.

Care leavers: a person aged 25 or under, who has been looked after by a Local Authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14; and who was looked after by the Local Authority at school leaving age or after that date.

Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS): provides a range of services for young people including family support, social care, education, skills and youth justice, early years services, mental health and child protection services.

Choice based lettings: the system through Gateway to Homechoice enabling applicants for housing to choose from a range of vacant properties on the social housing register to “bid” on (register an interest in).

Community Safety team: improve the quality of life and work to keep our residents, visitors, and employees safe.

Data insight: valuable information obtained from analysing data.

Decent Homes Standard: a minimum standard that requires a reasonable state of repair, modern facilities and services, and thermal efficiency.

Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC): is the previous name for the ministerial government department with the responsibility for housing. This department is currently named the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Dependent child: a person aged 0-15 years old in a household, or a person aged between 16 and 18 in full-time education and living in a family with their parent(s) or grandparent(s). This definition excludes anyone aged between 16 and 18 with a partner/spouse or living with a child.

Deposit Bond Scheme (DBS): offers a deposit in the form of a bond that landlords can claim against at the end of the tenancy, if required.

Digital exclusion: unequal access and capacity to use digital technology.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG): grants provided by the Local Authority to help to meet the cost of adapting a property for the needs of a disabled person.

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP): an extra payment to help people who claim housing benefit and are struggling to pay the rent.

Duty to Refer: under section 213B of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018, specified public authorities are required to notify a housing authority of service users they consider may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. Specified public authorities include prisons, youth offending teams, probation, job centres, child and adult social care, emergency departments, hospitals, and the secretary of state for defence. However, all agencies, including those not on the list, are able to use the duty to refer mechanism, and it is good practice to do so.

Eligibility (for homelessness assistance): depends on immigration and residence status. There are different rules for British and Irish nationals, and for people from abroad.

Empty home: a home with no permanent occupier or where the main resident lives elsewhere. Empty homes that have remained unoccupied for over six months from the moment of being informed are regarded as long-term empty. Houses that have been empty for six months or less, second homes and unoccupied exemptions fall into the wider definition of having no permanent occupier.

Environmental Health team: the Council department that protects the public from environmental hazards.

Equalities Act 2010: brought together various anti-discrimination laws into one single act, applying to any unlawful treatment (discrimination, harassment, or victimisation) relating to one of the Equality Act protected characteristics.

Equalities data: is used to assess the comparative situation of a specific group at risk of discrimination due to protected characteristics, to ensure public policies promote equality.

Fuel poverty: a household is in fuel poverty if: they have required fuel costs that are above average and were they to spend that amount they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

Gainful employment: steady paid work that allows for self-sufficiency.

Gateway to Homechoice bands: once an applicant has registered on the social housing register and the application has been assessed the applicant will be placed into one of five bands (Bands A-E), depending on assessed level of housing need. A is the highest need and E is the lowest level of housing need.

H-CLIC (The Homelessness Case Level Information Classification): is the homelessness data collection system, which was introduced in April 2018 to collect case level data, which will provide more detailed information on the causes and effects of homelessness, long-term outcomes and what works to prevent it.

Health inequalities: unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within society.

Homelessness acceptances (statutory homeless): are households for whom the Council has accepted a duty to rehouse / accepted the main duty.

Homelessness Advisory and Support Team (HAST): a team within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) that advises local authorities on homelessness and provides guidance materials.

46 Household Support Fund (HSF): a government funded scheme that can assist with rent and service charges if you are struggling with housing costs.

House of multiple occupation (HMO): house occupied by more than two people who are not all members of the same family.

Housing Advice team: is made up of the Housing Options team, the Accommodation team, the Temporary Accommodation team, and the Policy team. They manage the social housing register and temporary accommodation, prevent and relieve homelessness, and develop housing strategies and policies.

Housing association: nonprofit organisations that provide low cost “social housing” for people in need of a home. Any trading surplus is used to maintain existing housing and to help finance new homes.

Housing Options team: provides an effective housing advice service to the public. Where customers are homeless or threatened with homelessness the officers determine statutory duties owed under the Housing Act 1996 Part VII (as amended) and prevent and relieve homelessness using a range of methods and interventions. Sub teams have specific responsibilities such as Ipswich LET who work with the private rented sector to access accommodation and the Rough Sleeping team that delivers services to support people to move away from harmful rough sleeping into the project pathway. The Housing Options team includes specialist officers lending expertise to areas including welfare rights and income maximization, domestic abuse, and criminal justice.

Homelessness assessment: an assessment of an individual's circumstances and any duties owed to assist them under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG): a government grant to support Local Authorities to deliver services that prevent and tackle homelessness.

Housing Related Support (HRS): accommodation for individuals with support needs.

Intentionally homeless: Local Authorities make enquiries to decide if homeless households are intentionally homeless; that is that they consider that the applicant deliberately did or didn't do something that caused them to lose their home. If the Local Authority decides that a homeless household is intentionally homeless, it only has a duty to provide short-term accommodation, usually for 28 days.

Ipswich Lettings Experience Team (Ipswich LET): project developed by Ipswich Borough Council to increase access to good quality homes in the private sector for anyone living in Ipswich faced with losing their existing accommodation.

Ipswich Locality Homeless Partnership (ILHP): brings together charities, Local Authorities, churches, health organisations and funders to create a range of services to meet the needs of people affected by homelessness in the Ipswich area.

Ipswich Standard: an enhanced version of the government's Decent Homes Standard that requires a higher standard for accommodation of repair, modern facilities and services, and thermal efficiency.

Landlord Security Scheme (LSS): like a deposit bond but offers this security where an applicant has no guarantor.

LGBTIQ+: stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, and Asexual. The '+' represents minority gender identities and sexualities not explicitly included in the term LGBTIQ.

47 Link worker: an individual that works with one or more organisations to deliver tailored and holistic support to access and maintain accommodation to mutual service users.

Local connection: a connection to an area that fulfils the specified criteria relating to previous residence, employment, family associations, or special circumstances.

Local lettings scheme: in exceptional circumstances, the Gateway to Homechoice may decide to let properties on a slightly different basis from normal: in the interests of building a strong and sustainable community or to deal with particular local issues. The set of criteria where this applies is called a “local lettings scheme”.

Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (LWA): assists those experiencing financial hardship with things such as food, heating, clothing, and fuel, or to pay household bills.

Main duty: a duty to provide temporary accommodation until the duty is ended, usually by an offer of settled accommodation. The main duty will be owed when the relief duty has ended and the Local Authority is satisfied that the applicant meets the other criteria of being eligible, homeless, in priority need, and not intentionally homeless.

Marginalised and vulnerable adults: lack of access to resources, opportunities and rights which leads to relegation to the edge of society. Some marginalised adults may also be vulnerable for a reason and may be unable to take care of or protect themselves from harm or exploitation.

Mediation: a flexible and confidential process used to settle a dispute between two or more people.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG): the UK government department with responsibility for housing, communities, and local government in England. Previously called Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

Money advice: provides debt advice and financial guidance.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC): a local, multiagency victim focused meeting where information is shared on the highest risk cases of domestic violence and abuse between different statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

National housing crisis: describes the shortage of housing across the country, particularly social and affordable housing, leading to increasing rents and house prices.

“Nearest neighbours”: other Local Authorities who are similar, based on several factors aside from geographical location, such as population, gender proportions, percentage working age, percentage unemployed and numbers from ethnic minority groups. This allows for comparison between different Local Authorities.

No recourse to public funds: people who are subject to immigration control and have no entitlement to welfare benefits, to home office asylum support for asylum seekers, or to public housing.

Other household types: multi-family households, two or more unrelated adults.

48 Overview and scrutiny committee: ensure that members of a Local Authority who are not part of the executive could hold the executive to account for the decisions and actions that affect their communities.

Owner occupation: properties owned outright by the occupier or being bought by the occupier with a mortgage.

Pathways: routes into accommodation or for seeking assistance from the Local Authority for specific groups of people such as care leavers and individuals moving on from supported housing.

Policy team: is responsible for data gathering and analysis as well as writing policies and strategies within housing services.

Prevention duty: is owed when a Local Authority is satisfied that a person is threatened with homelessness within 56 days and eligible for assistance. It requires an authority to take reasonable steps to help the person to secure accommodation.

Priority need: a priority for accommodation given to specified groups of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

Private rented sector: all rented property other than that rented from Local Authorities and housing associations.

Private Sector Housing team: offer advice and support to tenants, homeowners, and private landlords to ensure that homes are safe and a healthy environment for everyone.

Protected characteristics: defined by the Equality Act 2010 as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Registered Provider (RP): provider of social housing registered with the Homes and Communities agency.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL): housing association.

Relief duty: where a Local Authority is satisfied that someone is homeless and eligible, it must take reasonable steps to help them secure accommodation for at least six months.

Rent arrears: debt owed for rent to a landlord.

Rent deposit: a sum of money paid by the tenant to the landlord which the landlord retains as security against loss or damage or rent arrears. Landlords are required to register their deposits in a government approved scheme.

Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS): rent is set at Local Housing Allowance rates and the Council guarantees the rent is paid to the landlord.

Rent in advance: landlords can require tenants to pay rent in advance.

Ring-fenced funding: separate funding for a specific purpose.

Rough sleeping: defined by the government as 'people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, station).'

Rough Sleeping Project / Initiative / funding: a government funded initiative that has supported Local Authorities in delivering local and tailored rough sleeping services to give those in need the best chance of a safe and sustainable life off the streets.

Rough Sleeping Steering Group: partner agencies meet to discuss data and trends, funding opportunities and foster collaboration.

Rough Sleeping Working Group (RSWG): weekly meeting in which partner agencies and support workers meet to discuss support needs and housing options for those currently sleeping rough or at-risk of sleeping rough.

Section 188 interim accommodation/emergency accommodation: short-term accommodation provided for eligible homeless households with a priority need, whilst enquiries and prevention and relief duties are carried out.

Section 193 temporary accommodation: accommodation provided to homeless households who have had the main homelessness duty accepted.

Severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP): activated when there is a risk to life due to weather conditions.

Sheltered housing: accommodation for sale or rent exclusively to elderly or vulnerable people, often with estate management services, emergency alarm system and warden service.

Shortlisting: the process of determining the position of applicants who bid on properties on the social housing register (Gateway to Homechoice) based on their banding for rehousing and their time spent on the register.

Single family households: married, civil partnership and cohabiting couples with and without children, as well as lone parents.

Single people: one-person households.

Social housing: housing owned and managed by Local Authorities and housing associations.

Social housing register: Gateway to Homechoice/Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system.

Spend to Save: allocated from the government Homelessness Prevention Grant funding to prevent homelessness through measures such as paying rent arrears and deposits for applicants to assist them to secure accommodation.

Statutory duties: duties owed by the Local Authority to assist individuals who are homeless or threatened with homelessness under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (prevention, relief, and main duty).

Statutory homelessness: Local Authorities in England have a statutory duty to secure accommodation for households who meet the specified criteria for being eligible, homeless, in priority need, unintentionally homeless and have a local connection to the Local Authority area if prevention and relief activities have been unsuccessful. There is no duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people.

Suffolk Homelessness Officers Group (SHOG): managers from each Local Authority Housing Options team within Suffolk meet regularly to share learning and ideas.

Suffolk Housing Board: Suffolk Local Authorities working together collaboratively on housing related issues.

50 Suffolk Office of Data and Analytics (SODA): creates multi-organisational data insight by analysing local data.

Suffolk system: the network of partners working collaboratively and strategically together across Suffolk.

Supported exempt accommodation: housing that provides support and supervision to enable vulnerable adults to live independently.

Supported housing: accommodation where residents receive support, supervision, or care.

Temporary accommodation: provided by the Local Authority to homeless households pending enquiries into their homeless application and to homeless households accepted as homeless.

Tenancy Services team: manage council tenancies and related services we provide our tenants such as tenancy support.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC): people under 18 who claim asylum and do not have adult family members with them or who they could join. Under the Children Act 1989, social services are responsible for asylum applicants under 18.

Universal Credit: a benefit designed to support people who are on a low income or out of work. It replaced six previous benefits and is based on a single monthly payment, transferred directly into a bank account.

Upstream prevention: act early to identify and support at-risk groups.

Welfare reform: changes to the rules concerning several benefits offered within the social security system. It was enacted by Parliament on 8 March 2012.



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