Ipswich Housing Strategy
2025 - 2030

Annual Report: One Year On.

IPSWICH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Introduction

Ipswich Borough Council's Housing Strategy was revised and updated in January 2025. The new Housing Strategy 2025-2030 comprises five priorities:

1. Ensure housing of all types and tenures is available to meet housing need.
2. Improve the quality and standard of all housing.
3. Be an excellent landlord to our tenants.
4. Support households to maintain access to accommodation.
5. Ensure older persons have access to housing and services that meet their needs.

The Housing Strategy is accompanied by a comprehensive Action Plan, which is updated and amended quarterly to record what has been achieved, ensure projects are moving forward at an adequate pace, and add new actions as required.

This report will look at each priority in detail. For each priority, there will be a short update on any relevant data and statistics (based on what was originally reported in the 2024 Ipswich Housing Report), followed by an update on what has been achieved towards each priority in the first year of the Housing Strategy 2025-2030. Finally, the report will explore what the challenges have been so far and what the future might look like for Ipswich Borough Council and its residents.

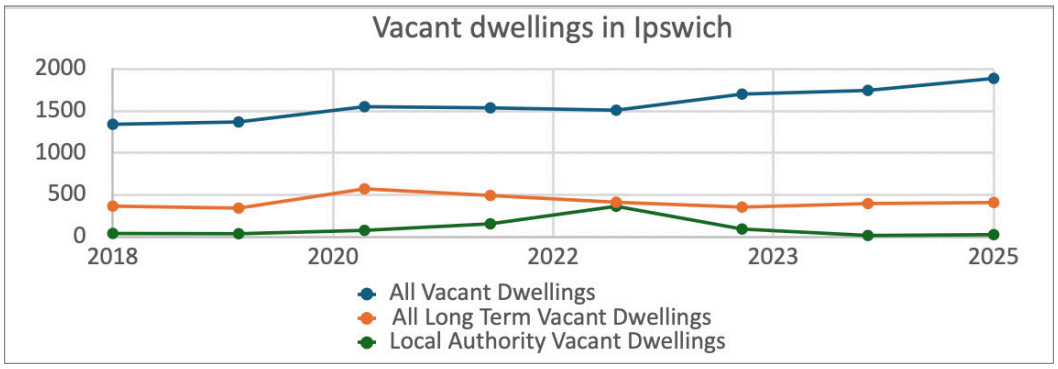
Priority One: Ensuring housing of all types and tenures is available to meet housing need.

Data update

Between 2023 and 2025, the total number of homes in Ipswich (both social and private) increased by 415[1]. This increase is slightly higher than that seen in the two years prior (350), but the proportion of the year-on-year increase remains lower than that seen nationally.

Between the 1st of April 2024 and the 31st of March 2025, 275 additional homes were provided overall (after accounting for any losses), an increase of 64 from the previous year. Of these, 102 were affordable housing completions (37.1%), contributing towards meeting identified housing needs across different tenures. A total of 233 dwellings were delivered on previously developed land (84.7%), and 133 were within the central IP-One Area (48.4%), supporting efficient use of land in sustainable locations[2].

The number of vacant dwellings in Ipswich increased slightly between 2024 and 2025, but the number of vacant Local Authority-owned homes remained low, at just 28[3]. The chart below shows the number of vacant dwellings in Ipswich since 2018, including long term vacant dwellings and those owned by the Council.

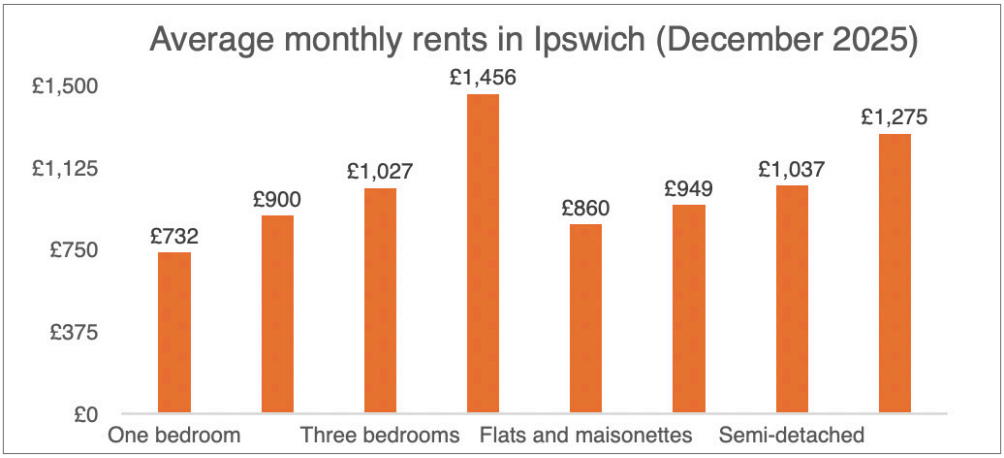


Median earnings for Ipswich residents have continued to increase but are still below those of Suffolk, the East of England, and England[4], as can be seen in the chart below.



The average house price in Ipswich in November 2025 was £225,000, a 1.6% rise from the year before[5]. However, this rise only impacted detached (£400,000), semi-detached (£264,000) and terraced properties (£209,000), as the average price of a flat in Ipswich decreased slightly (£132,000)[5].

The average monthly rent in Ipswich was £980 in December 2025, a 5.2% increase from the previous year. Those in flats and maisonettes and in terraced properties, and those in one-bedroom properties, were more impacted by this increase[6]. The chart below shows the average rents in Ipswich in December 2025 by bedroom number and property type.



In 2024/25, a further 41 properties were lost through Right to Buy. However, in the same financial year, according to our Planning and Development team, Ipswich saw 102 more affordable homes, a much higher number than for the past eight financial years, in which the net increase for this type of house was between 7 and 47 each year[7].

Achievements

We have conducted a review of the Council's new build design guide and specification. If approved, the proposed changes will reduce the overall cost of housing built by the Council.

Ipswich Borough Council are currently working with Handford Homes to develop the pipeline for phase two of Council house building – this is in early stages of desktop assessment. This means even more affordable homes for Ipswich residents in the future.

The Policy and Strategy Officer for Housing Advice has obtained Housing Enabling training and attends a quarterly enabling group. This means that the Housing Advice team can contribute their expertise towards planning decisions, ensuring that the homes built in Ipswich meet the needs of the community. **The Policy and Strategy Officer also attends a quarterly Suffolk Policy and Enablers Forum**, in which officers from neighbouring local authorities come together to share best practice and ensure a joined-up approach across the county.

The Planning Policy team is beginning work on a new Local Plan. In preparation, a Call for Sites exercise has been undertaken to inform the identification of land, with the results available on the Council's online mapping service. This represents an early stage of the Local Plan process, which will also include the commissioning of a Housing Needs Assessment, jointly with other Suffolk authorities, to provide an up-to-date evidence base. This work will underpin future policy development and help ensure that housing provision responds effectively to identified needs, supporting the identification of sites and the planning of a mix of housing types and tenures.

A Council-wide Brownfield Delivery Group was established during the past year, bringing together relevant teams across the Council to support the delivery of key housing sites identified in the Local Plan. Through this work, five sites in and around the town centre and waterfront area were identified and are now being assessed by Ipswich Borough Council's development company, IPSERV.

The Planning Policy Team published a Housing Delivery Action Plan to support the delivery of housing across a range of types and tenures to meet identified needs.

The Planning Policy team published the Self-build and Custom Build Monitoring Report 2024/25, providing an update on demand and delivery of self-build and custom build housing in the borough. This supports the Council's ability to plan for a wider range of housing types and tenures in line with identified need.

Council housing developments at Bibb Way and Ravenswood have been completed, delivering 233 new social housing properties. Furthermore, four properties have been purchased via the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF), one property was purchased through Buy Back, and another property was purchased from the open market. This has increased the Council's supply of settled accommodation, meaning we can help more households requiring social rent properties and temporary accommodation.

The Ipswich Garden Suburb, a planned sustainable urban extension to the north of Ipswich, continues to be developed, delivering a range of house types to support identified need. **Detailed planning permission has been granted for 778 dwellings on the Henley Gate and Fonnereau neighbourhoods. At least 229 dwellings are now occupied on Henley Gate. A Country Park, including play area, is open to the public and two bridges over the railway line are nearly complete.**

Priority Two: **Improve the quality and standard of all housing.**

Data update

In 2024, 85% of Council-owned properties met the Ipswich Standard. In 2025, this increased to 98%.

Across our Council housing stock we conducted 749 External Stock Condition Surveys and gave tenants the option to choose the colour they would like their external doors and walls to be.

Various improvement works were carried out across our Council homes, including the installation of 346 new kitchens and bathrooms, the re-roofing of 270 homes, installation of solar panels on 111 homes and electrically re-wiring of 73 homes.

We completed 333 Disabled Adaptations within Council homes, supporting our tenants to live independently in their current home. We are also looking to address the needs of disabled residents within our new build programmes.

In 2024/25, the Private Sector Housing team issued 105 HMO (Houses in multiple occupation) licences, processed 70 Disabled Facilities Grants, served 25 notices and formal letters, completed 431 service requests, provided tailored advice and support for 24 renovation grant enquiries and inspected 203 dwellings for significant hazards. 8 long-term empty properties were also brought back into use.

Achievements

We have completed a "Tenant Census" of our Council tenants and received 42% feedback during that exercise, which will help evolve service delivery according to need.

The Planning Policy team carried out a review of the Article 4 Direction for HMO's and it was found that this is operating as intended. Applications within the area are being assessed against Local Plan policy, and there is no evidence of displacement or new concentrations outside the boundary. This approach supports the Council's priority to improve the standard and quality of homes by managing the distribution of HMOs and helping to maintain balanced and sustainable communities.

We increased the number of Council tenants who have opted in to receive 'Tenant Times' – from 350 in 2024/25 to 968 in 2025/26. This will improve communication and increase trust between the Council and our tenants.

As of the end of March 2026, 73% of the Council's housing stock has been subject to a recent stock condition survey, following the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) methodology. This will help us to understand the condition of our housing stock so we can make any necessary improvements.

This year, we invested £25m into repairs, improvements, adaptations and compliance to ensure our social homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. We completed 78% of repairs on time within the allocated priority and reduced our repairs backlog significantly from 1,469 outstanding repairs in June 2023 to 929 in September 2025. This has improved Council tenant's lives as their homes are safer and better maintained, and any repairs are dealt with more efficiently.

We recruited four new Housing Officers, meaning Housing Officers can spend more time supporting, and building stronger relationships with, tenants.

The Council has recently implemented the requirements of Awaab's Law, which will ensure our social homes are safer and healthier for our tenants, and that any necessary repairs are carried out promptly. **We have hired a dedicated Performance and Projects Officer whose sole focus is collation of data and insights associated with the 'Big Nine' – Gas, Electrical, Fire, Water Hygiene, Asbestos, Lifts, Smoke and CO2, Damp and Mould, and Stock Condition** – to ensure we are compliant and can reduce risks for our tenants more quickly and efficiently. **This information will be compiled into a Dashboard which will be published on our website and updated quarterly,** to increase transparency and share our achievements with residents.

Fire improvements across the Council's housing stock have begun in January 2026 and will continue over the next 24 months. These improvements will ensure all our housing stock is compliant with the legislation and will lead to a reduced fire risk and safer homes for our tenants.

We have already obtained EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) ratings for over 4,000 of our Council properties and are currently looking to tender for a new contract that will deliver a further 3,000 surveys. This will allow us to have a clear picture of the condition of our housing stock so we can plan how to achieve the requirement of all properties having an EPC rating of C or above by 2030.

Priority Three: Be an excellent landlord to our tenants.

Data update

The below chart shows the Tenancy Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) results for 2024/25, compared with those for Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 of 2025/26. These show that we have maintained or improved satisfaction levels across all areas, and significant progress has been made in the areas 'Repairs in the last 12 months', 'Listens & Acts', 'Communal Areas', and 'Approach to ASB'.



1,484 tenancy visits have been completed between April 2025 and February 2026.

In 2025, the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team progressed 46 cases and obtained a 100% satisfaction upon case closure from victims reporting anti-social behaviour.

In 2025, we increased the number of involved tenants by 271%, compared with the previous year. These Council tenants have volunteered their time to support tenant engagement, influence, and feedback.

In Quarter 3 of 2025/26, Housing Services received 14 compliments and 63 complaints. 34 of these complaints were from Council tenants complaining about Housing Repairs. The reasons for these complaints were missed appointments, poor workmanship, repeated repairs, ongoing damp and mould issues, and communication and service delays. 15 complaints related to Housing (Council Tenants). The reasons for these complaints were service delays, process issues, staff conduct and communication, and neighbours and anti-social behaviour. Finally, 8 complaints were related to Choice Based Lettings and/or Gateway to Homechoice. This was due to the applicant's dissatisfaction with the assessment or banding of their social housing application, and due to the length of time taken to process the application.

Achievements

As can be seen above, we have continued working on improving our Tenancy Satisfaction Measures (TSM) results, which are published quarterly here.

We implemented a targeted Tenancy Visit programme, which focuses on Council tenants and properties with the highest risk factors. This has allowed the Council to be more efficient and to devote more time to the tenants and properties with the greatest need.

We launched the new Estate Walkabouts and Talkabouts programme in May 2025. This was very successful at identifying multiple housing and tenancy issues that may have otherwise gone unchecked. Internally, these have also improved relationships and communication between service areas, particularly between Housing, Councillors and Repairs. Most importantly, this programme has helped to build trust within the communities by showing a physical presence and identifying new and potential involved tenants. During the winter months, Talkabouts replaced Walkabouts in the form of Housing Service themed coffee mornings. These will now continue alongside Walkabouts in the warmer months. These events have been received positively by tenants and have improved accessibility and trust.

We organised eight Community Days events, including litter picks, electricals and metal removal, and more. These events were carried out collaboratively between the Maintenance and Contracts team, involved tenants, and Councillors. These have improved the relationship between tenants and officers and led to cleaner communal areas.

We recruited an additional Tenant Engagement Officer. This has enabled a stronger collaboration between Housing teams and Council tenants to deliver and develop engagement opportunities including the recruitment and support of volunteer involved tenants.

In collaboration with our tenants, we developed a new Terminology and Language approach. This will be taught to all new starters as part of their induction and not restricted to frontline staff. This will ensure that our communications are clear, transparent, and delivered in a way that meets the needs of our tenants. **An 'Easy Read' approach is already being used to address litter and illegal dumping in a specific location and to provide assurances for Council tenants who are being decanted from our older person schemes and rehoused.** We hope that these measures will mean our tenants feel respected and informed, and that tenants feel that our communications are clear, honest and demonstrate empathy.

We launched our new Council tenant engagement framework, "Choices for Voices", which provides our tenants with a range of opportunities to influence how we shape and deliver the services that impact them. To support with the delivery of this programme, **we hired a second Tenant Engagement Officer.**

We commissioned a review of our Tenant Engagement framework with Tpas (England's leading tenant engagement experts) in July 2025, which has enabled a successful refocus of tenant engagement governance and the way in which the Council works with its tenants to gain insight, feedback and collaborative design on its services and functions.

We established four Transformation Action Groups (TAG's) to achieve an improved regulatory inspection judgement. **These groups meet monthly, and a report is produced from each meeting** to evidence the work being carried out. So far, some of the outcomes of these TAG's include: a firmer approach to ASB case management; a new mapping arrangement to identify trends; the development of training schedules for staff across the Housing Service on the topics of Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse; a monthly review of risk around compliance to the standard; and the beginning of a deep dive into mutual exchanges to ensure we are supporting tenants who wish to move this way.

We are working on improving the quality and depth of the data we hold about our tenants – we have commissioned Housemark to undertake a Data Maturity Assessment and are working on improving our data collection around personal characteristic data through an Every Contact Counts approach. This will help us improve our service and ensure it caters to the needs of our tenants.

We have signed up to the Stop Social Housing Stigma Campaign and since then have held several workshops with Council tenants to gather their insight and delivered a training session to all Housing staff. This has informed our Housing staff about some of the issues that our tenants are facing and equipped them with the tools to support them and ensure they are always treated with dignity and respect.

The Council revised its ASB reporting system, meaning it is now easier for ASB victims to contact us and obtain support.

For more information about what has been achieved and what we are working on to support our tenants, consult the Ipswich Borough Council Housing Services Annual Report 2025.

Priority Four: **Support households to maintain access to accommodation.**

Data update

As of December 2025, according to a population survey, the cost of living remained one of the most important issues facing the UK. 62% of those surveyed reported that their cost of living had increased compared to the previous month. 34% of adults reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford their energy bills, and this increased to 58% for those living in social housing. Furthermore, 31% of adults reported finding it very or somewhat difficult to afford their rent or mortgage payments, and this increased to 45% for those who paid rent to a private landlord[8].

In 2024/25, Ipswich Borough Council used government-funded Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) to the amount of £199,861 to support households on Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit who are struggling with their housing costs. The majority of this expenditure (57%) was used to support struggling tenants in situations unrelated to welfare reform. 25% was used to support tenants affected by the Local Housing Allowance reforms, and a further 13% to support those affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy. The remaining 4% was used to support tenants affected by the benefit cap[9].

On the 1st of April 2025, there were 2,523 active applicants on Gateway to Homechoice, of which 97 were in Band A, 514 in Band B, and 659 in Band C. In 2024/25, 572 properties were let in Ipswich through Gateway to Homechoice, a decrease from the 719 properties let in 2023/24 and the 651 properties let in 2022/23. Further analysis of this decrease indicates that this was due to a decrease in lets by Registered Providers and not due to a decrease in lets of Council-owned stock. The reasons behind this are unclear. Of the 572 properties let, 205 were let to direct applicants, 184 to homeless applicants (owed a main duty), 154 to transfer applicants, 20 to applicants owed a prevention duty and 9 to applicants owed a relief duty. In Ipswich in 2024/25, the average waiting time for social housing for those in Bands A-C was just over 10 months. The longest waiting time was for households requiring a 3-bedroom property, who waited on average nearly 19 months[10]. Actual wait times can be considerably longer, as this data is an average across all bands.

In 2024/25, the Council supported 815 households to prevent their homelessness and 250 to relieve their homelessness. By January 2026, homelessness was prevented in 795 households and relieved in 222 – therefore, it is likely that 2024/25 figures will be surpassed this year.

Since April 2025, the average number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of the month has been 81. This is a reduction from the previous year, in which the average was 103.

Between April and December 2025, the Ipswich LET team signed up 30 properties to the Rent Guarantee Scheme and secured private-rented sector accommodation for 37 households. This is a slight decrease from the previous year, in which by December 2024, 36 properties were signed up to the RGS and 39 households were supported to access the PRS.

The number of people sleeping rough in Ipswich appears to have increased in 2025/26. Between April and December 2025, the average number of people found bedded down each month was 34, compared to the same period in the previous year, in which the average was 24. This appears to have been driven by a large increase in new rough sleepers and a slight increase in long-term rough sleepers. There was also a very evident increase in individuals under 25 being found bedded down. The most common reasons for loss of settled home for those found bedded down were being asked to leave by family or friends, being evicted from supported accommodation, being evicted from private rented accommodation, and leaving prison.

Following the end of Housing Related Support (HSR) previously offered by Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council set up the Ipswich Support Accommodation Pathway (ISAP), offering supported accommodation to single homeless people with support needs. Since April 2025, 58 individuals have already been accommodated through this programme, of which 22 were previously in temporary accommodation, 16 were sleeping rough, and the remaining 19 being under a prevention duty with the Council. The programme has been highly successful, with only four evictions to date.

The Council's Tenancy Sustainment Scheme provided floating support for 291 Council tenants, assisting them with a variety of issues, including budgeting, adaptations, welfare, downsizing, and more.

Achievements

In order to prepare for the Supported Housing Act, Ipswich Borough Council has begun collaborating with neighbouring local authorities on this project. This will ensure a joined-up approach between the Councils which will be beneficial once Local Government Reorganisation has taken place.

We invited the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to carry out a deep dive into our homelessness service. The MHCLG commended our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 as clear and realistic; and also found our website to be user-friendly and comprehensive. It was also noted that we have a higher rate of positive outcomes at prevention stage, meaning we successfully support households before they become homeless. However, it was noted that Ipswich also has one the highest homelessness assessment rates in the country, likely due to the lack of a triage service. Furthermore, it was stated that more face-to-face assessments should be carried out and that the current provision of one interview room would likely be insufficient to achieve this.

Across our social housing stock, we reduced average void times to 16 days, as of August 2025, and continue to improve in this area. This means that voids are dealt with swiftly and properties are let as soon as possible, reducing waiting times for those on the housing register.

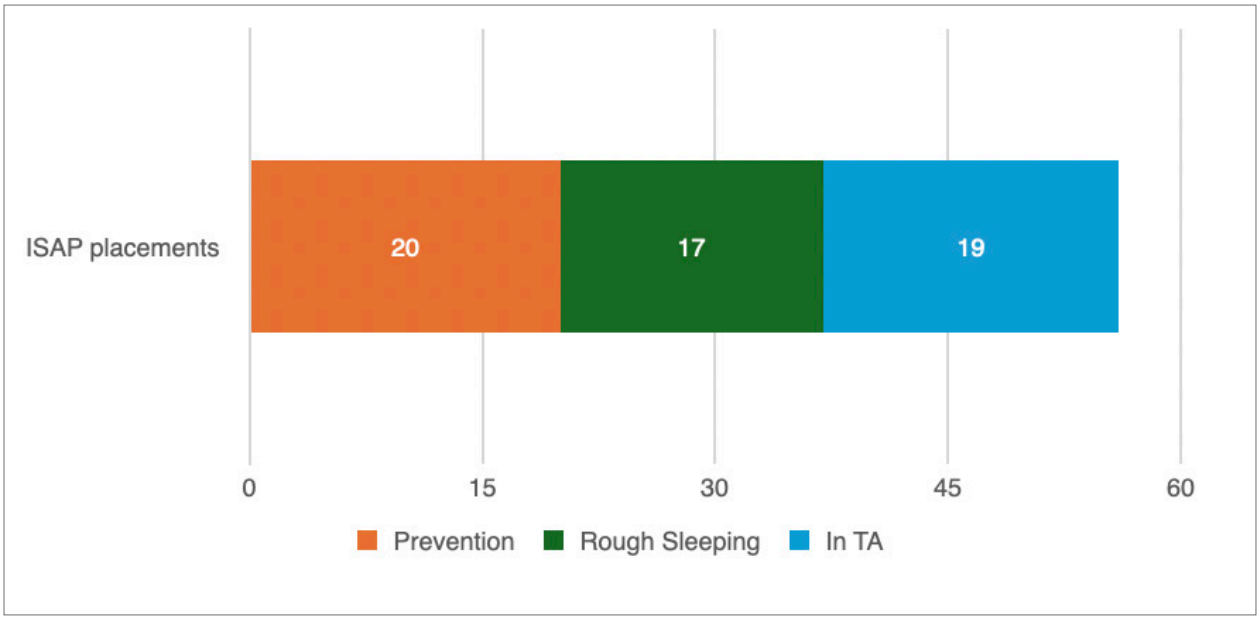
We supported over 30 Council tenants to downsize via the Tenant Incentive Scheme in 2024/25, not only freeing up larger homes for families in need but also helping tenants move somewhere that is more suitable for them as it requires less maintenance and saves them money.

We have developed a series of internal dashboards that allow us to monitor homelessness and rough sleeping trends in the town.

We carried out a review of our Temporary Accommodation service. As a result of this, a restructure of the Accommodation team took place in April 2025, which has streamlined the placements and Gateway assessments process and will deliver significant savings. **We are also currently in the process of producing a Temporary Accommodation Strategic Review,** which will help us improve our Temporary Accommodation service further.

To improve service accessibility, **we have adopted a new Customer Access Strategy and have approved a new SMART digital assistant** to reduce waiting times for those contacting our Customer Service Centre.

We successfully launched the Ipswich Supported Accommodation Pathway (ISAP) project following Suffolk County Council's decision to end Housing Related Support (HRS) funding. The chart below depicts the number of individuals that have been housed through ISAP between the 1st of April and the 31st of December of 2025 broken down by their circumstances prior to the placement. This project has ensured that we are supporting vulnerable individuals requiring support to access suitable accommodation.



Priority Five: **Ensure older persons have access to housing and services that meet their needs.**

Data update

In April 2025, there were 254 active applicants over the age of 60 on Gateway to Homechoice, a decrease from the previous year in May 2024, when 295 applicants over 60 were recorded. Out of the applicants over 60 in April 2025, 48% did not have an accessibility need, 25% required ground floor accommodation, 24% required a level access shower and 2% required a wheelchair accessible property. Out of those requiring accessible accommodation, 80% were in Bands A-C. These proportions are similar to those seen in May 2024.

Achievements

Fire improvements across the Council's housing stock have begun in January 2026 and will continue over the next 24 months. A Sheltered Housing improvement programme, where we plan to significantly upgrade and improve these schemes, **will follow once the fire improvements are completed.**

Between the 1st of April 2018 and the 31st of March 2025, a total of 62 care bed spaces were delivered, contributing to meeting the accommodation needs of older residents and supporting a wider mix of housing provision.

We successfully re-housed Council tenants from Wingate House, one of our sheltered schemes. We supported our tenants to find new homes and achieved a 0% complaints rate. **We are in the process of re-housing two other older person housing sites, Broke Hall House and Cumberland Towers. These have been undertaken due to long term building viability assessments.**

The joint housing needs assessment being developed by all Suffolk authorities will include evidence on older person's housing needs, informing future provision within growth areas such as the Ipswich Garden Suburb.

Challenges

In July 2025, following an inspection earlier that same year, the Council received a consumer grade of C3 from the Regulator of Social Housing. This reflects the regulator's view that, while there was evidence of good practice in a number of areas, there were also serious failings in how we delivered the outcomes of the consumer standards, and therefore significant improvements were required. Particularly, it was highlighted that the Council lacked information about the condition of our homes, had insufficient information to support our understanding of and response to the diverse needs of our tenants, and lacked meaningful opportunities for tenants to influence the services we deliver. The Council had already identified many of these areas and had begun taking steps to address them prior to the inspection. Since the inspection we have made significant progress and continue to work closely with the regulator through our Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan, including through the setup of the previously mentioned Tenancy Action Groups (TAGs). We are seeing substantial improvements across the areas identified and are in ongoing discussion with the regulator regarding the timing of a regrading. Our ambition is to make sufficient progress in the areas identified by the regulator during 2026 to obtain a C2 grading and then continue improving to achieve a C1 grading in 2027. Our progress towards improving our regulatory judgement can be followed here.

A new funding formula for the Homelessness Prevention Grant was introduced and will come into effect from April 2026/27. This has impacted how we deliver our services and meant we have had to make some changes.

We have been working on implementing multiple upcoming changes, including Awaab's Law, the Renters Rights Act, the Supported Housing Regulation, and the National Plan to End Homelessness.

The future

The recently published National Plan to End Homelessness will have an impact on how we deliver our homelessness services, including the provision of temporary accommodation. We will review our current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 in line with this and will update the associated Action Plan.

Phase 2 of Awaab's Law will come into force in October 2026 and will extend the existing duty on social landlords to address all health hazards promptly. We will take the necessary steps to prepare for this.

Phase 1 of the Renters' Rights Act will begin on the 1st of May 2026 and will introduce various measures, including the abolishment of section 21 'no fault' eviction and the introduction of Assured Periodic Tenancies in the private rented sector. We are now working on ensuring we have everything in place to support landlords and tenants through these changes.

The Supported Housing Act is currently being implemented and will introduce greater regulation to supported housing. This will require a new strategy for supported housing to be developed – in Suffolk, this is being developed collaboratively by all the Local Authorities in the region.

Suffolk Housing Board is looking at the development of a developer forum – wider conversation to take place in the first quarter of 2026 to review how more homes can be built.

By October 2026, we plan to have completed stock condition surveys for all of our tenanted stock.

The Council has committed to a capital improvement programme of £17m for 2026/27 to ensure our social homes remain decent and safe.

We are currently working on a Strategic Review of our Temporary Accommodation. Once this has been approved, we will begin working towards achieving the recommendations outlined. This will help us ensure our temporary accommodation provision is sustainable and enables us to meet our ambitions to increase earlier prevention, reduce homelessness, and meet the needs of homeless households within Ipswich.

Conclusion

Substantial progress has been made towards achieving the priorities set out in the Housing Strategy 2025-2030, despite significant challenges. The Council has a clear pathway for the upcoming year and is set to continue achieving the outlined priorities. However, it is worth pointing out that service delivery may be affected by factors outside our control, including ongoing geopolitical tensions and wider economic uncertainty.

References

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