

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2019 - 2024



Foreword

Welcome to East Suffolk Council's first Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The previous joint strategy from our predecessor councils Waveney and Suffolk Coastal has brought positive changes and outcomes. However, we still face very clear challenges with homelessness and rough sleeping increasing nationally. We are not immune from these challenges and this new strategy will enable us to focus on the areas where we can have a real impact on people's lives, working with partners to deliver crucial outcomes.

The Council's Business Plan and Housing Strategy both already recognise the need for more homes in the district and the importance of addressing the increase in rough sleeping and homelessness. This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy refines our approach and presents the proactive steps we will take to ensure that appropriate accommodation is available to meet a range of needs.

Our area is large and diverse – including rural villages, market towns, coastal resorts, as well as our larger towns of Lowestoft and Felixstowe - so one size does not fit all and we require a strategy that meets the different needs of different places. We are the most populous district in England and we experience and understand the full range of homelessness problems across our rural and urban population. This strategy considers the nature of these problems and following a long and in-depth consultation with statutory agencies, the third sector organisations and clients who have used the service, we believe we have a set of actions that are challenging but achievable to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in East Suffolk.



Cllr Richard Kerry
Portfolio Holder for Housing

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Introduction

The purpose of the Strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires the Council to carry out a review of homelessness in its district to inform the production of a homelessness strategy every 5 years. The review intends to determine the extent to which the population in our district is (or is at risk of becoming) homeless, assess the likely extent in the future, identify what is currently being done, and identify what resources are available to prevent and tackle homelessness.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the biggest change to homelessness legislation in 40 years, came into force in April 2018 and is particularly relevant when setting out our priorities and associated actions within limited resources. The Act has an emphasis on the prevention of homelessness and on partnership working. Inevitably, the Council cannot act in isolation from other areas of public policy when addressing some of the underlying causes of homelessness. The Act changed the way homelessness advice and assistance is delivered by councils. It reformed the homelessness duties to ensure that councils provide meaningful advice and assistance to a much wider group than under the previous legislation.

East Suffolk Council came into existence in April 2019 incorporating the former district councils of Waveney and Suffolk Coastal.

The Council adopted an East Suffolk Housing Strategy in 2017 that identified as one of its priorities to "Implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to ensure members of the community threatened with homelessness are provided with increased support". This Homelessness Strategy helps the Council in achieving this objective.

Strategy design

The Council wants the Strategy to constructively contribute to how we address the issues of homelessness and rough sleeping in East Suffolk. It is hoped that partner organisations will use the document in their discussions about meeting housing need.

Timing of the Strategy

We are required by law to carry out a homelessness review and to formulate and publish a strategy. Suffolk Coastal and Waveney's previous strategies expired in 2018. Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which was actually implemented in 2018, together with the establishment of the new East Suffolk Council, it is now right that we issue a new strategy.

Strategy Presentation

The Strategy is set out with information in boxes to help the reader.

Reviewing and Updating

The Strategy has been written following the introduction of the new Act and changes in rough sleeping arrangements. There will continue to be a period of change and it will be necessary for the Council to adopt an 'agile' approach and keep this Strategy and Action Plan under review. We have an East Suffolk Homelessness Forum and are engaging with the MHCLG in its consultation on implementing local Homelessness Reduction Boards which would adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to preventing and relieving homelessness. This Strategy and Action Plan will be reviewed regularly and updated by the East Suffolk Homelessness Forum with referral to a Homelessness Reduction Board if established at a later date.

Our Actions

Many of the pages include a boxed area on the right of the page (like this) where we identify the actions we intend to take. These actions form the basis of our Action Plan. Hopefully, in this way you can see where the actions originated from.

The Action Plan is reproduced at the end of this Strategy and will be the main focus for checking our progress.

Our first identified action is:

**1 - Publish and circulate
our Action Plan to all our
stakeholders**



Homelessness and its causes

What do we mean by homelessness?

A home is not just 'bricks and mortar' and the Council must assist people who are or may become homeless in the near future.

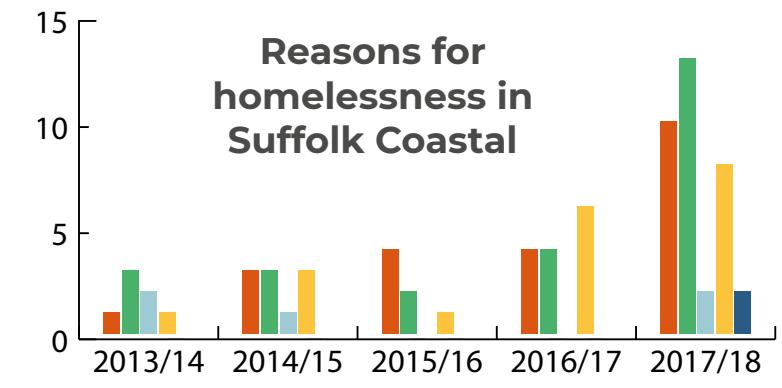
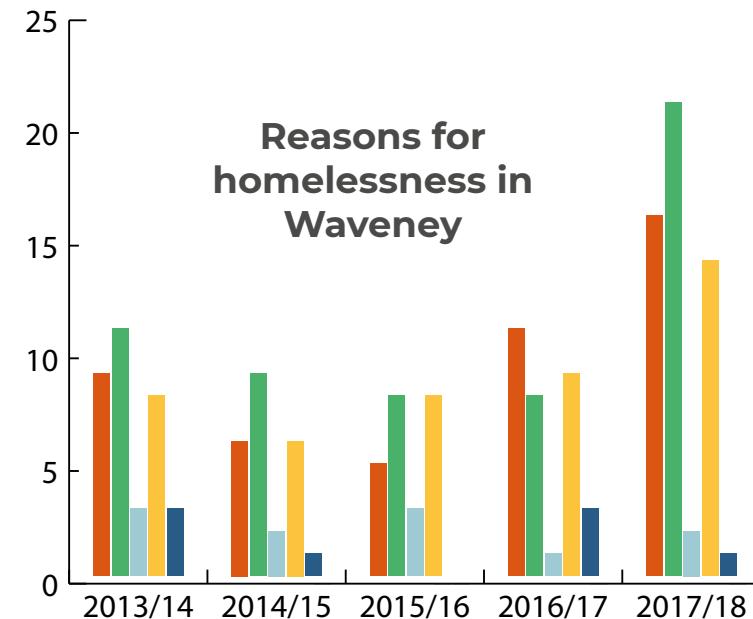
Examples of this are:

- A household with no legal right to occupy a property. This may include people staying with family or friends who want them to leave;
- A household being evicted from a tenancy or whose home is being repossessed;
- A property in an unsafe condition or where its condition is affecting the health of the occupants and there is no practical remedy;
- A household staying in a nightshelter or other insecure short-term accommodation.

The main causes of homelessness

People become homeless for a variety of reasons but the most common categories are shown in the graph to the right. The data is displayed for the two previous councils because it predates the formation of East Suffolk Council.

Nationally, the proportion of homelessness caused by the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy (AST) has seen significant growth. Overwhelmingly ASTs are the main type of tenancy used in the private rented sector.



Legend:
■ Leaving relatives/friends
■ Relationship Breakdown
■ Rent/Mortgage Arrears
■ End of AST
■ Leaving Institutions

National trends and pressures

Nationally, the trend for homelessness acceptances and the use of temporary accommodation has been rising steadily. This trend was experienced by both Waveney and Suffolk Coastal to varying degrees and is expected to continue for East Suffolk Council.

The graph opposite shows a comparative position nationally, regionally and locally. It is clear that current homelessness acceptances are lower in East Suffolk than in England or the East of England.

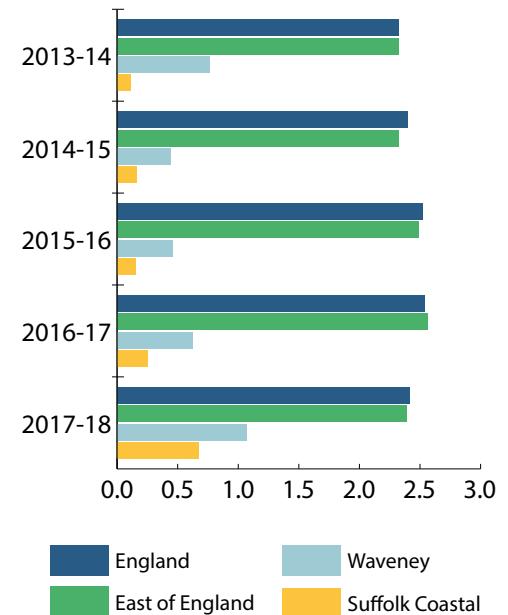
The increase is not just numerical but also in the complexity of situations arising. Locally this demands more staff time to fully engage with households as well as working closely in partnership with relevant agencies to achieve a suitable and sustainable housing solution.

Predicted levels of homelessness

The forecast for England is that homelessness will almost double over the next 20 years. This is based on current assumptions about the labour market and economy alongside current policy. It is predicted that this will lead to a 312% increase in people in unsuitable homes and 238% increase in rough sleeping between 2016 and 2036.

Source: Crisis report on Homelessness Projections: Core homelessness in Great Britain.

Homeless Acceptances – numbers per 1,000 households



Our Strategy

This Strategy sets out how we intend to continue to manage the pressures we face, specifically:

- The complex needs of rough sleepers and a lack of suitable specialist accommodation;
- Increasing homelessness and rough sleeping;
- A general lack of affordable housing;
- A private rented market which is increasingly unaffordable and which is not expected to grow and may in fact shrink due to changes in tax regulation and legislation;
- Private sector rents which are higher than the Local Housing Allowance rates that can be met through welfare benefits, especially in the south of the district;
- The impact of the changes introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Local trends and pressures

Locally within Suffolk there are trends across the range of services that collectively impact on homelessness and the ability of the Housing Needs Team at East Suffolk to assist in preventing and relieving homelessness.

Learning Disability

In 2014 it was estimated that 13,700 people in Suffolk suffered with mild, medium or severe learning difficulties. This is projected to increase to 15,000 by 2030. Of the 2014 figure 2,800 were recorded as having complex or severe learning disabilities.

Families

In 2017 there were 1,783 cases open to Suffolk County Council's Children's and Young People's Service (CYPS). This service seeks to help children at an early stage and to keep family units together. Where CYPS are involved with families there are potential implications for housing authorities, due to the complex set of needs and support requirements of these households.

Care Leavers

There is a need to ensure that young adults leaving care are provided with a roof over their head and to ensure it is sustainable for them with appropriate support from partner agencies. In 2017 there were 292 care leavers seeking accommodation in the County. It is important that care leavers access suitable accommodation with support and are not just given the key to the door without the relevant skills and experience to cope. We recognise that we need to work closely with our colleagues at the County Council to meet future housing need for this group and we are currently discussing how we can assist with provision.

Mental Health

It is estimated that within Suffolk that 1 in 4 people (186,000) have ongoing mental health issues. It is also estimated that 1 in 8 people (93,000) are receiving treatment for mental health issues within the county.

SUFFOLK PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT 2016

Criminal Justice

Within Suffolk it has been established that nearly one third of people in receipt of Housing Related Support (HRS) services have a criminal conviction. HRS services are funded by the County Council to help resolve housing issues.

Substance Misuse

Across Suffolk substance misuse is an escalating problem. A total of 1,972 adults were in treatment in 2017 across the county.

In 2016 9% of the total support offered by the Drug and Alcohol Outreach Service was housing related. This increased to 15% in 2017.

Financial resources for tackling homelessness

Financial context

The Council is operating in the context of reduced Central Government funding due to the Local Government Financial Settlement in 2018/19 and previous cuts to local authority grant funding.

East Suffolk in 2019 has a budget gap of £3.8m.

Recent Central Government funding settlements and grant allocations have been short-term, making it difficult for the Council to make longer term financial plans and commitments.



Government funding for homelessness

There are several funding streams available to assist with homelessness provision:

'New Burdens Funding' - The Government recognised that the HRA placed additional burdens on councils, including additional data collection requirements. As a result, additional funding was made available (New Burdens Funding) of £122,000 for 2017/18, £95,000 for 2018/19, and £109,000 for 2019/20 for East Suffolk. This funding comes to an end in March 2020 and any staff or services which have been funded through this route will be lost if the Council cannot find an alternative source of funding. A one off payment of £6,379 was made available to assist with additional ICT and data collection requirements. Up to the summer of 2019 we had actually spent £20,268 on meeting these additional demands - £13,889 more than the funding received.

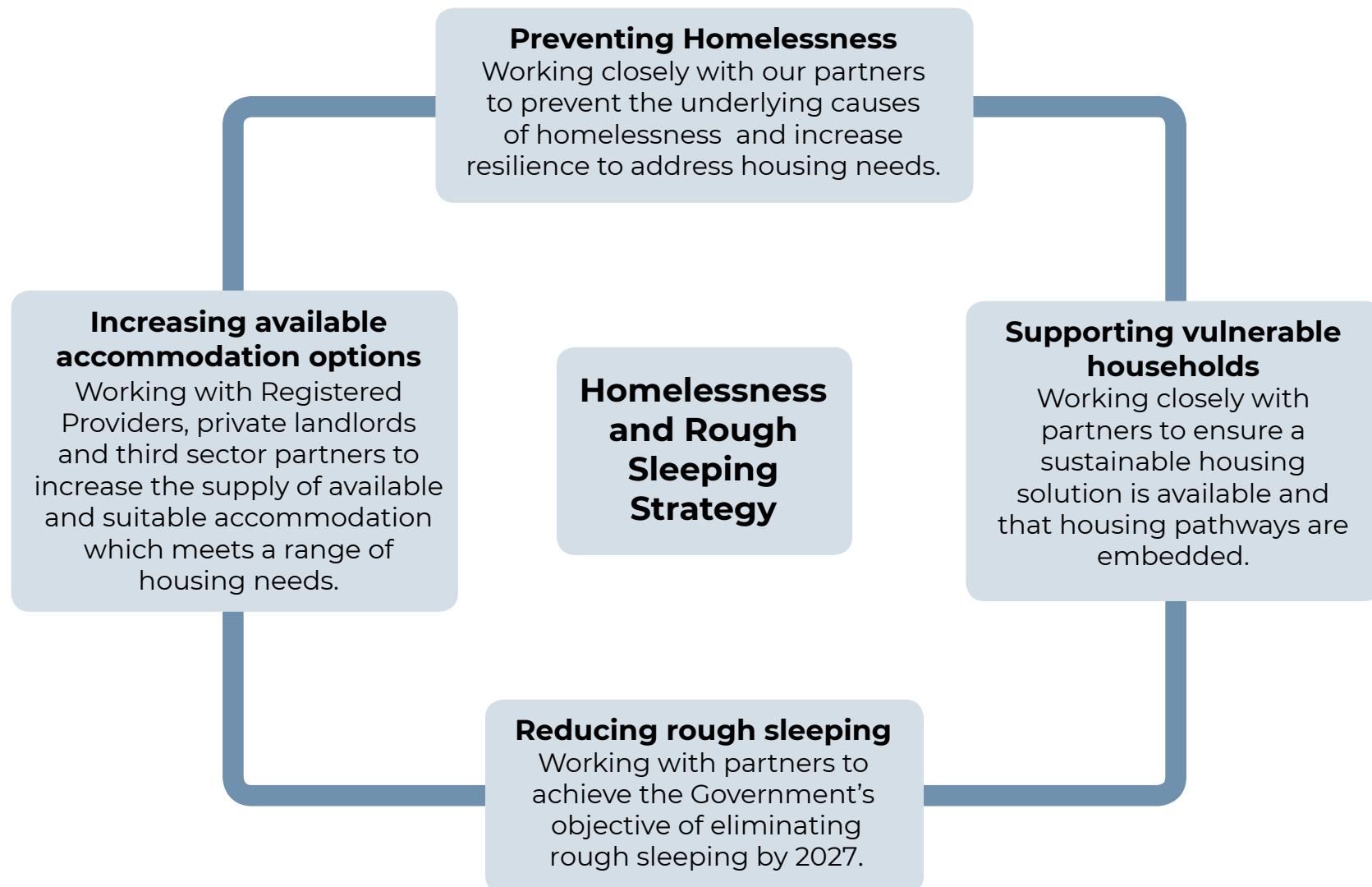
'Flexible Homelessness Support Grant'- The Department of Work and Pensions used to distribute a payment known as the Temporary Accommodation Management Fee to local authorities. £40 per week was made available to local authorities outside London for eligible units of temporary accommodation. This regime came to an end in March 2017 and has been replaced by the 'flexible homelessness support grant (FHSG),' which is a lump sum paid to local authorities each year. The new regime gives councils more flexibility and control over their homelessness budgets but the allocations have only been announced until 2019/20. We do not know what our allocations for 2020/21 and future years will be.

The FHSG is complemented by the Homelessness Prevention Grant which we receive. In 2018/19 both former councils received a combined £185,000 and we have £168,000 in 2019/20. Overall, we have received £672,000 external funding for homelessness in 2018/19 and £828,000 for 2019/20. At present, we do not know how much money will be available for tackling homelessness from 2020/21 onwards.

Our gross expenditure on homelessness was £1.9m in 2018/19 and is forecast to be at least £1.35m in 2019/20. The impact on the General Fund has been a net loss of £735,000 in 2018/19 and is projected to be an expense to the council of £590,000 in 2019/20. If Central Government funding is reduced, this impact will increase in future years.

East Suffolk's strategic priorities

The actions identified in this strategy have these four strategic priorities at their core.



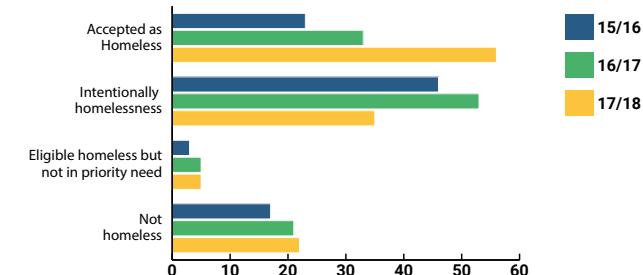
Review

Here we look back over the period of the last Homelessness Strategies for Waveney District Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council. We consider the work we have done and the supporting data as well as what we have done to prevent and relieve homelessness in the two districts, what have been our successes and what our customers and partners think about what we have achieved in the last strategy.

Homelessness in the former Waveney area – the facts and figures:

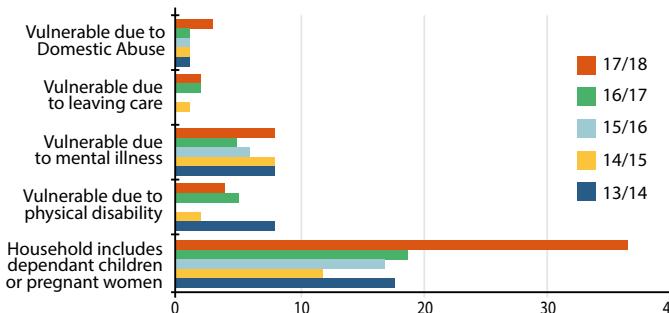
Homelessness decisions and acceptances

This chart summarises the homelessness decisions taken over the last 3 years. The most common reason for not accepting a legal duty to households was that they were found to be 'intentionally homeless'. This decision was taken because the household deliberately did something (or failed to do something) which directly led to them losing accommodation. There was a growth in cases where a legal duty was accepted in 2017/18.



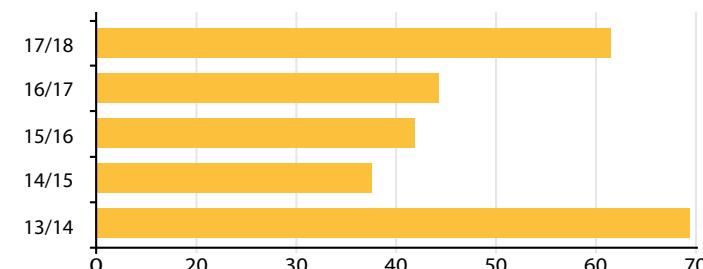
Accepted as homeless cases - profile

This chart summarises the priority need categories of homeless households in Waveney. The most common priority need is having dependent children or a pregnant woman in the household. Cases can be complex and difficult to resolve, either because someone is in crisis or their accommodation is not suitable or safe. The HRA 'duty to refer' requirement on public bodies such as prisons or hospitals should give rise to more proactive and collaborative working if the Council is notified in time to prevent homelessness. We need to ensure that the supply of accommodation in the district caters for the full range of housing needs of our residents.



Number of households in temporary accommodation

We have a duty to secure accommodation for some homeless households. Households may be placed in temporary accommodation while their application is in progress, or after being accepted as homeless but while waiting for secure accommodation to become available. There has been an increasing trend upwards since 2014 in the Waveney area. Since the introduction of the HRA the use of temporary accommodation is likely to go up due to the new 'Relief' duty which lasts for a maximum of 56 days.

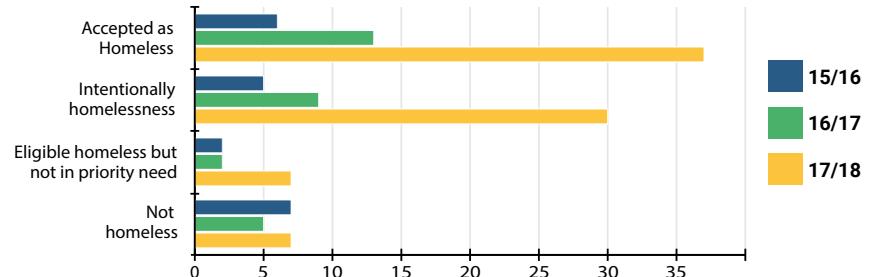


Review

Homelessness in the former Suffolk Coastal area

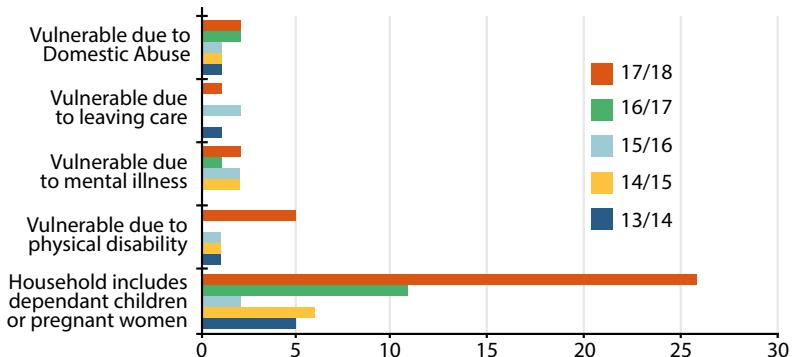
Homelessness decisions and acceptances

This chart summarises the homelessness decisions taken over the last 3 years. A noticeable growth in homelessness acceptances and intentionally homeless decisions in the district in 2017/18 can be noted.



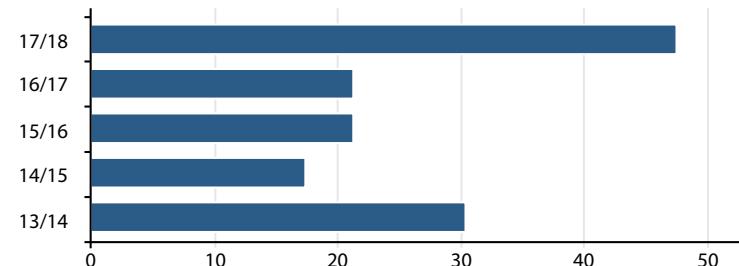
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Number of households in temporary accommodation

We have a duty to secure accommodation for some homeless households. The same upward trend since 2014/15 as Waveney can be noted.



Review

Our work to prevent and relieve homelessness

Homelessness prevention and relief

The table opposite shows the number of households in both former district areas in the last two years where homelessness was prevented. The preventative measures involved either assisting the household to sustain their accommodation or finding alternative accommodation for them.

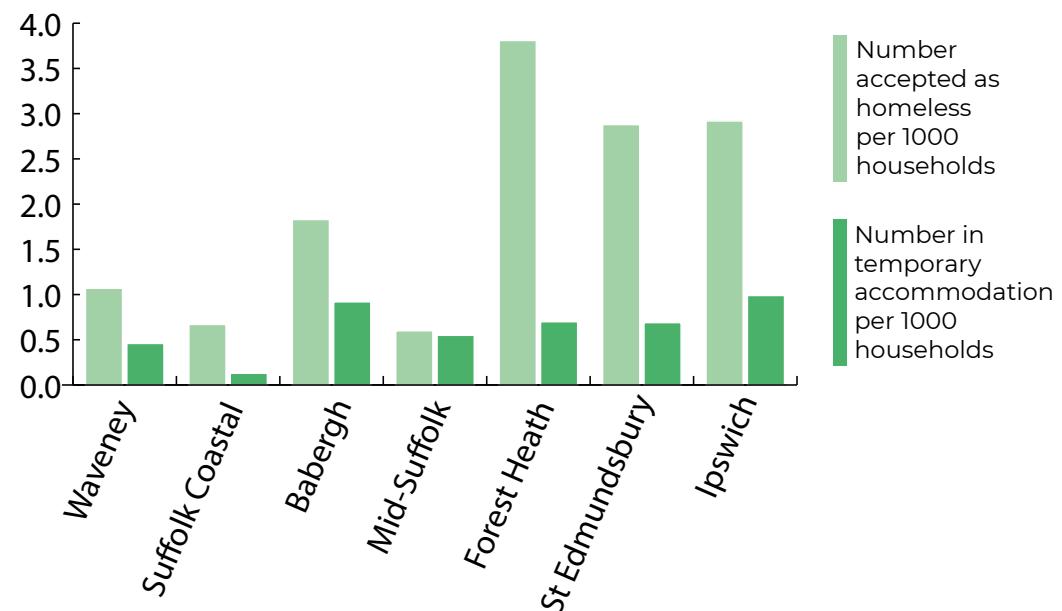
We monitor the number of households approaching us for help, the number of households we help to stay in their existing housing, and how many were helped to find alternative accommodation either before they became homeless (prevention) or after they became homeless (relief). In both districts the number of preventions fell substantially, reflecting the challenges we have been facing in accessing affordable accommodation.

Homelessness acceptances and households in temporary accommodation

This chart shows how we compared with other councils in Suffolk in 2017/18. The numbers of homelessness acceptances and households in temporary accommodation are adjusted in proportion to the local population.

In the Waveney and Suffolk Coastal districts we accepted a main homelessness duty to 1.07 and 0.67 households respectively (per 1,000 population) and 0.46 and 0.13 households (per 1,000) were placed in temporary accommodation. Both of these figures are low when compared to some of the other councils in the county.

	WDC	SCDC	WDC	SCDC
	2016-17		2017-18	
Household remain at home	129	117	86	38
Household found alternative accommodation	263	130	174	95
TOTAL	392	247	260	133



Our successes over the life of the last Homelessness Strategy

Partnership Working

We recognise the importance of partnership working to help deliver a more comprehensive, tailored and holistic service response. We have a number of partnerships in place which contribute to this response including Suffolk County Council, the CCG, Registered Providers and the third sector. There are a number of specialist link workers working across these organisations to deliver a joined up approach to service delivery.



Our Actions

2 - Maximise funding opportunities through partnership working, and with statutory and voluntary agencies as well as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Rough Sleeping

We have been very successful in gaining funding from the Government to develop specific initiatives to address entrenched rough sleeping and to assist those who are at risk of rough sleeping. We take a partnership approach with Ipswich Borough Council, Ipswich Housing Action Group, Notting Hill Genesis Housing Association and Anglia Care Trust in the South and with Lowestoft Rising and Access Community Trust in the north of our district.

In 2018-19 we worked with over 200 rough sleepers or those with no settled accommodation. To date the initiatives have been successful – we experienced a drop in rough sleeping from 26 in 2017 to 11 in 2018.

Initiatives we have supported include the Thin Ice Project in Lowestoft operated by Access Community Trust to provide emergency accommodation and specialist support for those that find themselves homeless or vulnerable over the winter months. The success of The Thin Ice Project helped 81 people over 4 months during the 2018-19 winter season. This support included £16,000 from the Council's finances.

The challenge going forward will be:

- accommodating rough sleepers with complex needs such as alcohol related dementia and issues around mental health who cannot always access statutory services; and
- finding solutions for those who have exhausted their housing options including losing their social housing.

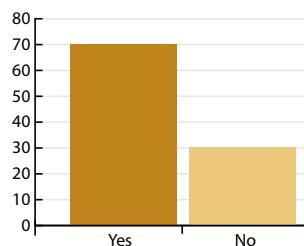
Review

Our Performance over the life of the last Homelessness Strategy

Customer Feedback

Feedback is important to help us improve and to identify trends to help us to respond to emerging issues. We have attempted to contact 10% of all our customers in a telephone survey and have contacted all our partners with an online survey.

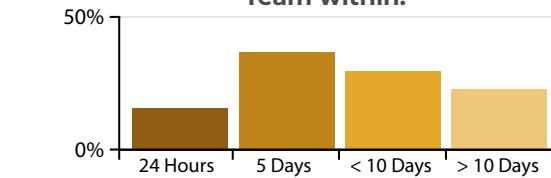
Was this the first time you approached us for housing advice?



We discovered in our survey that for 70% of the people we saw it was the first time that they had contacted the Council for housing advice – a figure higher than expected.

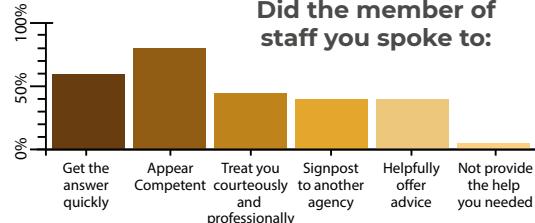
It is unclear if this is a figure that will change with the introduction of the HRA.

After your initial approach to the Council were you contacted by the Housing Needs Team within:



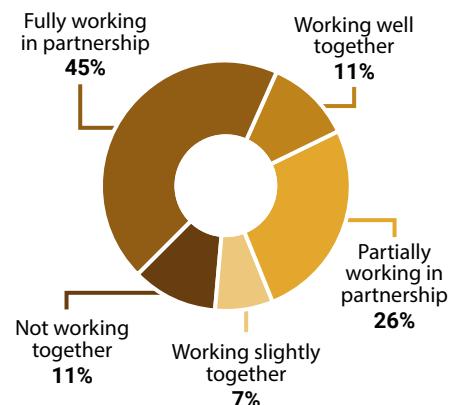
When asked about the time taken to respond to their initial request for advice, over 70% had a contact within 10 days.

Did the member of staff you spoke to:

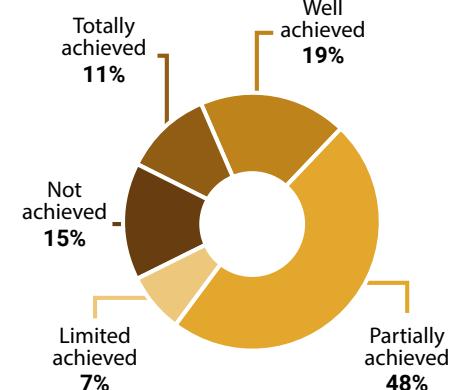


The survey asked about the quality of customer service experienced. Over 80% stated that our staff were competent in dealing with their problem.

Partner Feedback



In the survey of our partners we asked their view on how well we had worked in partnership over the life of the previous strategy. There was a very positive view with 82% experiencing partnership working.



We also asked, "To what extent did you feel the objectives we set in 2013 have been achieved?" We were pleased that 78% of our partners believed that we had partially or fully achieved our objectives.

Impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act

The introduction of the HRA in 2018 has had an impact on the volume of people presenting to East Suffolk Council. The complexity of cases has also increased.

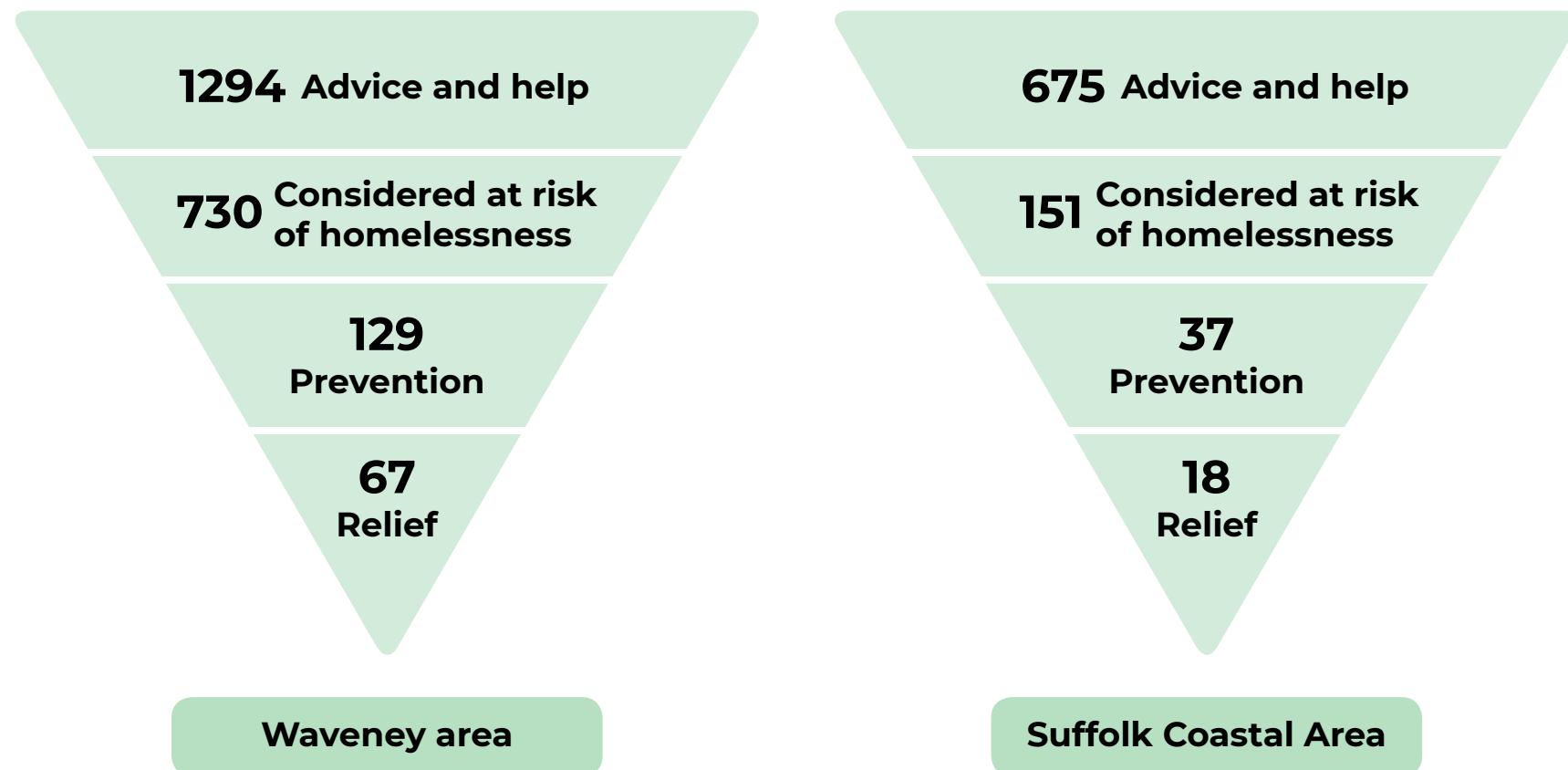
A snapshot view taken six months on from the introduction of the HRA showed an increase in footfall of 38% with an average caseload of 600 open cases at any point in time. A similar snapshot of the use of temporary accommodation showed 49 households compared to 37 at the same date in 2017.

There is a lack of accommodation in the district which is both available and affordable. We always seek to provide a long term resolution to homelessness and an appropriate accommodation option is a very important part of that resolution.

We are experiencing landlords ending Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST) for a variety of reasons including recent tax changes and taking an opportunity to create a vacancy to obtain an increased rental income. This is a significant future concern with the expected influx of construction and other workers into Leiston and surrounding areas with the future development of Sizewell C nuclear power station.



Post HRA performance



We looked at our data for the first six months of the Homelessness Reduction Act (April – October 2018). The numbers of households approaching the Council have increased, but early indications show that we are achieving success with the number of successful prevention and relief interventions we have had. We recognise the need to intervene early to help households and prevent homelessness and will work closely with our partners to achieve this, collaborating on new initiatives and joint ventures to broaden our contact with those who are or may become homeless.

The Housing Needs offer process

Early Intervention

Specific tailored advice, appropriate to need, to help people understand their housing options and help them make informed decisions. Click [here](#) for more detail about our pathways.

Information and advice

- Close partnership working.
- Digital information and resources such as leaflets available on request.
- Encouraging people to seek early help and Duty to Refer arrangements in place.
- Providing written advice.

Early identification

- Encouraging other organisations to actively seek to identify people at risk of homelessness and to refer people for help.

Prevention

If a household is homeless or under a threat of homelessness, we will:

- Work with them to create a Personal Housing Plan, setting out what they and what we will do; and
- Assess their support needs and try to help them find appropriate support and accommodation if necessary.

People threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

This stage can be longer or shorter due to individual circumstances.

Options to prevent homelessness:

1. The household is able to stay in their existing accommodation.
2. The household secures alternative housing before they lose their home.

Relief

This stage deals with people who are homeless. The Act requires the relief stage to last a maximum of 56 days.

If they are homeless:

1. Is immediate short-term housing available (such as with family or friends)?
2. If not, and the household has dependent children, we will secure emergency interim accommodation for them whilst we work on their application;
3. In the case of single people or couples without children, we may secure emergency interim accommodation if they are vulnerable, and if not, we will work with them to help them find somewhere to live.

Main Duty

We consider 'priority need', intentionality' and 'local connection'.

We will continue to house people who are owed a full duty until a long term option is available.

Preventing repeat homelessness

1. An assessment will be undertaken to assess the risk of someone becoming homeless again.
2. We will work with other agencies to put support in place to prevent threats of homelessness arising again.

Support to prevent homelessness

Early Intervention

Prevention

In order to effectively prevent homelessness, we need to:

- ensure that the causes and impact of homelessness on individuals and the community as a whole are understood;
- ensure that the potential benefits of prevention are shared across the health and social care sector; and
- ensure that we plan how we can prevent homelessness with as wide a range of partners as possible, particularly in light of widespread funding cuts across many sectors. Below we show some of the agencies who are relevant and the types of interventions that could be offered.

Service Users

Families

Care leavers

Rough sleepers

Gypsies and Travellers

Young people

Older people

Former members of the armed forces

People experiencing domestic abuse

People with complex needs

Likely agency involvement

GPs / Education / Job Centre Plus / housing providers / Children's Social Care
Social Care / Job Centre Plus

Police / Probation / Job Centre Plus / emergency housing providers / mental health teams / daytime support services

G&T sites / Private Sector Housing Team / Gypsy & Traveller Liaison Service / Suffolk Country Council / Other district councils

Job Centre Plus/ Youth Justice Team / Education

GPs / hospitals / Social Care / housing providers / voluntary sector (e.g. Age UK)

Royal British Legion or SSAFA

Police / hospitals / Social Care / housing providers / voluntary sector (e.g. refuges) / GPs

Social Care / hospitals / Substance misuse services / Mental health teams / Probation / Job Centre Plus / Police / Probation / Housing providers

Community-based support - This can be in either a formal planned way or informally through community or faith groups. Areas of activity we would like to develop are:

- Training by our staff for a wide range of agencies about homelessness
- Mentoring for people with a history of vulnerability
- Mediation for young people and their parents
- Tenancy training

Floating Support - This is formal support normally focussed on people experiencing issues sustaining their accommodation. Services can help directly or signpost to appropriate help from others. In our district Home Group are commissioned by Suffolk County Council to deliver this service but there are funding challenges in the coming year.

Our Actions

3 - Explore how we can mitigate any reductions in funding and consider impact.

4 - Work together with our partners and colleagues to explore how preventative services can be developed.

5 - Work with social landlords with the focus of addressing rent arrears and tenancy sustainment issues.

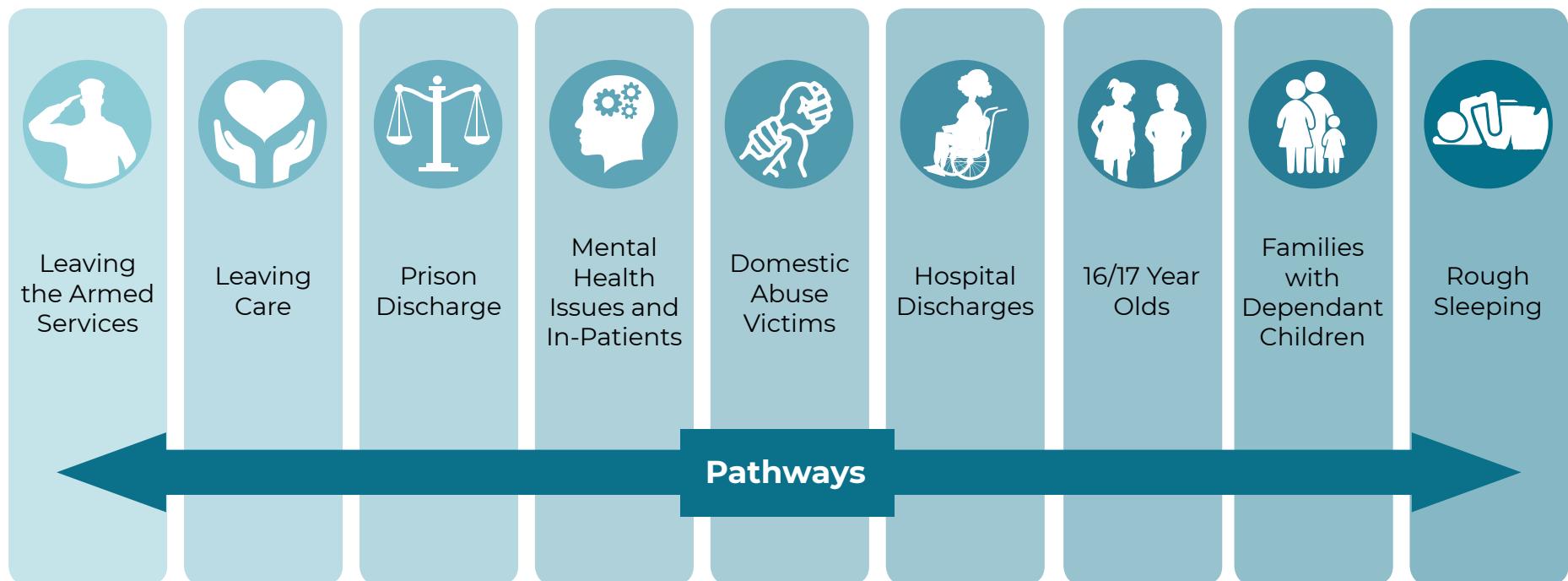
Housing pathways

What is a Housing pathway?

We have been working with other councils in Suffolk and partner agencies to ensure that there is a consistent approach towards homelessness in the county.

Most reasons for homelessness have had a 'pathway' developed, outlining the common approach that will be adopted in Suffolk. This helps service users and supporting agencies to understand how we work.

The pathways that have been agreed across Suffolk are listed below. [Detail on each pathway can be found on the Council's website here.](#)



Support to relieve homelessness

Relief

Main Duty

We seek to work with partner agencies to support people once they have become homeless. The County Council funds Housing Related Support (HRS) services which can be accommodation-based, or 'floating' where the support is linked to the individual rather than the accommodation. There is a shortage of this type of support and specialist accommodation for people with complex needs. The budget for the HRS is also under pressure and is being reviewed.

Households who are owed a relief or main duty are assisted to access alternative accommodation. In most cases households access private rented accommodation due to the shortage of social housing.

Specialist Accommodation:

East Suffolk Council is committed to providing the right housing and to this end we are actively engaging with the County Council about ensuring an adequate supply of appropriate specialist accommodation.

Rough Sleeping:

We have been successful in bidding for government grant funding to relieve rough sleeping in the district. We will be delivering 72 hr assessment hubs managed by Access Community Trust and Notting Hill Genesis Housing Association to take people off the street and assess their needs. We are also funding Supported Lettings Officers, a Rough Sleeping Coordinator and a Mental Health practitioner who will be pivotal in developing pathways into accommodation for this client group and in providing support.

Our Actions

6 - To participate in a review of Housing Related Support services and related resource priorities.

7 - To participate fully in multi- agency case conferencing arrangements such as MARAC, Lowestoft Interventions Group and Felixstowe Housing Forum, to find appropriate solutions.



The public duty to refer

There is now a duty on certain public bodies and agencies to refer people to us who are believed to be homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The referrer must have the consent of the individual to make the referral. People can ask to be referred to any council they choose. The agencies include:

- Prisons and agencies involved in working with offenders, including Probation services;
- Job Centre Plus;
- Hospitals (A&E and inpatient services);
- Social Care Services and Regular Armed Forces.

The referral process is new to us and the relevant public authorities. We have worked with other Suffolk councils and collectively we are committed to making the referral process as straightforward as possible.

We will also explore the best way to work with staff in other agencies to ensure they are aware of the duty. This will be challenging due to the range of services the duty applies to and the level of historical engagement we have with some of those organisations.

We acknowledge that the National Housing Federation have also made a commitment on behalf of our Registered Provider colleagues to comply with the referral principals.

Our Actions

8 - Keep digital information and paper leaflets under review to ensure they are appropriate, useful and up to date.

9 - Work with the designated agencies to develop a referral process and carry out training to highlight the importance of early notification of potential homelessness and the service we can offer.



Temporary and move-on accommodation

Family Accommodation

All family accommodation is accessed via the Council's Housing Needs Team with the exception of the women's refuge, which can be accessed by a number of agencies and direct referrals.

Most of the temporary accommodation the Council can access is through private sector lease arrangements and we hope to extend these arrangements across the whole of our district.

The Council owns a 24-unit scheme at Coppice Court for families with support needs. Support is currently provided by Access Community Trust.

Partnership arrangements are also in place with registered providers for the provision of temporary accommodation.

If people are housed in temporary accommodation but are likely to be found intentionally homeless, we try to help them secure private rented housing or supported housing to discharge our time limited duty.

Ordinarily, households to whom we have accepted the main duty are secured an AST in the private sector or, on occasions, housed through the Housing Register.

Single Person's Housing

Most of the single person temporary accommodation is accessed through the Council's Housing Needs Team.

We have arrangements with private landlords as well as partners such as Access Community Trust.

A shared house in Lowestoft owned by the Council is providing move on accommodation for singles, partnering with Solo Housing for support.

Our Actions

10 - Continuously monitor the length of time people spend in temporary accommodation.

11 - Continue to publish data on waiting times for social housing to help inform customer options.

12 - To ensure that there is an adequate supply of self contained temporary accommodation, especially in the south of the district where there is currently a shortage, to ensure we meet our statutory duties and best practice.

The Housing Register and new affordable homes

Access to social housing - The Council is part of the 'Gateway to Homechoice' lettings scheme that covers 7 Essex and Suffolk districts and boroughs. The scheme advertises and allocates vacancies in social housing. Most mainstream general needs council and housing association homes are let to Housing Register applicants through this scheme.

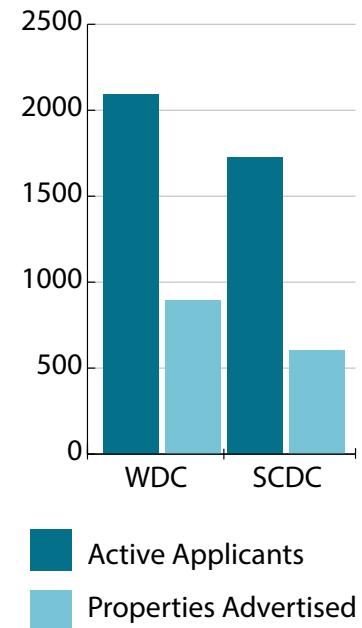
Key Policy Features:

- The scheme aims to sustain a balance between existing social housing tenants needing to transfer, new entrants to the sector and homeless households;
- Currently, we have no residency criteria for qualification to join the Housing Register. This is under review, in particular because we are concerned that our districts and boroughs may become particularly attractive to other districts and boroughs seeking to discharge their homelessness duties in our area.

It can be seen from the graph opposite that the number of properties advertised in 2018 could not match the number of active applicants. This has been the case for many years and shows the pressure the Council is facing where supply of social housing does not meet demand.

New Social Housing

- Our programme of new development of council housing is ongoing with a focus in the north of the district where Waveney Council retained their housing stock. In time new council housing will be built in the south of our new district.
- Between 2015 and 2018 the Council built over 80 new homes.
- It is anticipated that the numbers of new social homes will increase in the next few years as our Local Plans allow for more affordable homes to be built in East Suffolk.
- New social housing is not specifically planned to meet the demand from homeless households but increased lettings overall have a beneficial impact on our capacity to meet housing needs, thereby reducing demand on homelessness services.



Our Actions

13 - Work with the Gateway to Homechoice Partnership to review residency criteria and the common allocations policy.

Improving access to the private rented sector

Although we have a long term strategy to increase affordable housing in the district, we recognise that we also need to include the private rented sector. This tenure is the most realistic way that we will be able to help accommodate those who approach us for help.

Typically this will be through a mixture of loans or grants to tenants to help with upfront payments and fees, deposit bonds and guarantees to landlords. We will always ensure that accommodation offered is suitable and affordable.

There is a similarity in the size of the private rented sector throughout our district with this sector representing 14% of the total housing market in both the former Waveney and Suffolk Coastal areas. This is slightly larger than the social housing sector.

There are around 14,000 privately rented homes in our area, likely to be owned by more than three or four thousand landlords. It would be valuable to establish ways of communicating with landlords to maximise the availability of this type of accommodation as a means of providing a housing solution. The Housing Needs Team have a dedicated resource for liaising with private landlords as a first point of contact. We have found sustained relationships are key to working with landlords in this area.

Our Actions

14 - To focus our efforts in the south of the district to increase provision of private rented sector offers.

15 - To continue involvement in the Universal Credit Partnership arrangements for East Suffolk, and participation in landlord forums.

16 - To work with the Private Sector Housing Team regarding empty homes initiatives and improvement grants to bring properties back into use.

17 - To work with Third Sector organisations and statutory partners to develop a 'triangle tenancy' approach.

Strategy links

This strategy links with cross cutting pieces of legislation which have an interface with the prevention and relief of homelessness.

Related Legislation that impacts on our work:

Housing Act 1996 (as amended)

Housing and Planning Act 2016

Housing Act 2004

Health and Social Care Act 2012

*Homelessness Reduction
Act 2017*

Children and Social Care Act 2017

Welfare Reform Act 2012

Care Act 2004

Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016

Children Act 1989

Localism Act 2011



We have funded and worked with a number of organisations which assist us in the prevention of homelessness. Our partners include the following:

Registered Providers, Solo Housing, Citizens Advice, Access Community Trust, Anglia Care Trust, Suffolk County Council, Home Group, Lowestoft Rising, Felixstowe Housing Forum, Liberty Project, MHCLG, Private Landlords, Department of Work and Pensions, Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust, other local authority housing partners, Safeguarding Boards, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

Related Strategies:

[Suffolk Joint Needs Assessment](#)

[Suffolk Health and Well Being Strategy](#)

[National Rough Sleeping Strategy](#)

[East Suffolk Housing Strategy](#)

[Suffolk Domestic Abuse Strategy](#)

Action Plan

1 Publish and circulate our Action Plan to all our stakeholders

Review - Our successes over the life of the last Homelessness Strategy

2 Maximise funding opportunities through partnership working, and with statutory and voluntary agencies as well as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Support to prevent homelessness

3 Explore how we can mitigate any reductions in funding and consider impact.

4 Work together with our partners and colleagues to explore how preventative services can be developed.

5 Work with social landlords with the focus of addressing rent arrears and tenancy sustainment issues.

Support to relieve homelessness

6 To participate in a review of Housing Related Support services and related resource priorities.

7 To participate fully in multiagency case Conferencing arrangements such as MARAC, Lowestoft Interventions Group and Felixstowe Housing Forum, to find appropriate solutions.

Public duty to refer

8 Keep digital information and paper leaflets under review to ensure they are appropriate, useful and up to date.

9 Work with the designated agencies to develop a referral process and carry out training to highlight the importance of early notification of potential homelessness and the service we can offer.

Temporary and move-on accommodation

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12 To ensure that there is an adequate supply of self contained temporary accommodation, especially in the south of the district where there is currently a shortage, to ensure we meet our statutory duties and best practice.

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