

EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL HOUSING NEEDS TEAM

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION POLICY 2018

1 INTRODUCTION

1. Background

1.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 17, which came into force on 3 April 2018, requires all councils to:

(i) provide or secure the provision of a service, available free of charge to any person in the district providing information and advice on:

- a. prevent homelessness
- b. secure accommodation when homeless
- c. The rights of persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and the duties of the authority
- d. any help that is available from the council or anyone else, whether under this Part or otherwise, for persons in the authority's district who are homeless or may become homeless (whether or not they are threatened with homelessness), and
- e. how to access that help

(ii) start assessing an applicant at risk of being made homeless 56 days before losing their home.

(iii) identify all applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and are eligible for assistance and attempt to engage those applicants thereby becoming a proactive rather than reactive service.

(iv) offer every applicant who is homeless or threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance a Personalised Housing Plan;

(v) take reasonable steps to help all applicants that are homeless and eligible for assistance to secure suitable accommodation for the applicant's occupation for at least 6 months. There is an expectation that councils will have a private sector offer and the ability to step in and assist financially;

1.2 In addition, 'specified' public authorities will have a duty to refer a person to the council when that public authority considers a person, in relation to whom they exercise functions, is or may be homeless or threatened with homelessness.

- 1.3 East Suffolk Council has a duty to provide interim or temporary accommodation for households who approach the council as homeless and who meet the criteria as set out on the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and this includes s188 and our relief duty as per s189B which covers both interim placements while homelessness enquires are undertaken, and longer-term temporary accommodation placements for households accepted as homeless.
- 1.4 Within this document placements under both of these provisions will be referred to as temporary accommodation placements.
- 1.5 East Suffolk Council is dependent upon a supply of accommodation to meet the needs of households therefore the council must have options in place to deal with this type of emergency.
- 1.6 If no suitable accommodation is identified every effort will be made to maintain the applicant in their current accommodation, or to use the provisions within the Gateway to Homechoice allocations policy to prevent, and or relieve their homelessness.

2. Suitability of accommodation

- 2.1 This policy takes into account the statutory requirements on local authorities in respect of the suitability of accommodation, including the Suitability of Accommodation Order 2012 and has regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, as required by Section 11 of the Children Act 2004
- 2.2 When deciding if a temporary accommodation placement is suitable, consideration will be given to Chapter 17 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities which states that the following factors need to be taken into account:

- 2.3 The needs, requirements and circumstances of each household member should be considered, this includes any identified health or mobility issues, any care or support provided by agencies or the need to access specialist medical services.
- 2.4 The key factor to consider when assessing medical issues is whether the condition itself would make the accommodation unsuitable, for example offering an upper floor flat to a household member without the ability to climb stairs.
- 2.5 Consideration will be given to whether the accommodation is affordable for the applicant and their household.

3. The location of the accommodation

- 3.1 Factors to consider include the ability to access the workplace if in paid employment, avoiding disruption to the education of young people, especially those at critical points in time such as being close to taking GCSE examinations. Where possible East Suffolk Council would avoid placing applicants in isolated accommodation away from public transport, shops and other facilities in order for them to maintain established links with schools, doctors, keys services etc. and to ensure the wellbeing of the household.
- 3.2 However, East Suffolk Council has to be mindful of current prevailing housing conditions and demand and pressures that affect the council on a daily basis, whilst taking into account the individual needs of the households requiring assistance.
- 3.3 Whilst East Suffolk Council will have regard to this Policy when placing applicants in temporary accommodation to applicants, the council retains the discretion to take into account any particular personal circumstances of an applicant or the household when identifying accommodation.

4. The size and facilities of the accommodation

- 4.1 The accommodation provided should have adequate space for the household and this would be assessed by taking into account the needs, requirement and circumstances of the household as outlined above.

- 4.2 Households requiring temporary accommodation will often be placed into accommodation that has fewer bedrooms than a household would be entitled to on a permanent basis. The condition of the decoration, furniture in the property (where applicable), the layout or type of accommodation, provision of parking and lack of access to a garden are extremely unlikely to be classed as acceptable reasons for a refusal.
- 4.3 Assessments in regards to suitability of a temporary accommodation placement will be completed on a case by case basis to ensure that any temporary accommodation offered is considered reasonable and suitable for the household involved. These assessments are made within the context of the accommodation and resources that are available to the council.
- 4.4 The individual needs and requirements of a household will be assessed by a Housing Needs Officer to confirm whether an allocation would be suitable.
- 4.5 Consideration is given to any potential risks that an applicant may pose to existing residents or members of the public.

N.B If the applicant still refuses on the basis of suitability a Temporary Accommodation Placements Procedure Guide will be created to ensure an appropriate and consistent approach when allocating temporary accommodation.

- 4.6 Wherever possible, attempts will be made to identify suitable accommodation within East Suffolk Council's Hostel Accommodation providers, Housing Stock, Private Sector Leased properties (managed by the council), or within Temporary Accommodation Schemes managed by partner agencies.

5. Nightly placements including B&B placements

- 5.1 Circumstances may arise which require short notice placements of households into emergency temporary accommodation and therefore the options available can be very limited. In these cases the use of Bed and Breakfast or nightly let accommodation may be the only option available to fulfil the council's temporary accommodation duty. In addition, if an applicant contacts the Housing Needs team outside of

office hours and requires emergency accommodation, Bed and Breakfast, or nightly let accommodation is often the only option.

- 5.2 Consideration is given to the Code of Guidance which states that Bed and Breakfast accommodation is not to be regarded as suitable for 16 and 17 year olds or applicants with family commitments, therefore Bed and Breakfast placements for households of this type are only to be used if no other accommodation is available. The council aims for all Bed and Breakfast placements not to exceed a period of 6 weeks; however there may be exceptions to this if no other suitable accommodation options can be identified within the 6 week period.
- 5.3 Whenever an applicant is accommodated in a Bed and Breakfast, attempts will be made to identify alternative temporary accommodation as soon as possible.

6. Out of the district placements

- 6.1 The main points of emergency accommodation are based in Lowestoft and Felixstowe. Given the size of the district we will have to look at the reasonability of placing those applicants from Felixstowe in Lowestoft.
- 6.2 The council does not own any housing stock or lease any private sector properties that are located outside of the East Suffolk area .
- 6.3 However there are circumstances in which the council needs to place households into Bed and Breakfast accommodation outside of the East Suffolk, such as in cases where accommodation is required in an emergency and there is no availability in Bed and Breakfast accommodation located within the East Suffolk with whom the council has agreements in place.
- 6.4 Whenever an applicant is accommodated outside of East Suffolk, attempts will be made to identify alternative temporary accommodation within East Suffolk as soon as possible.
- 6.5 In some circumstances, it may be more appropriate for a placement outside of the area to be arranged, for example where an applicant may be at risk within East Suffolk.

7. Refusals of offers of Temporary Accommodation placements

- 7.1 If an applicant refuses an offer of temporary accommodation, they will be asked to provide reasons for their refusal which will be considered by the allocated Housing Options Officer. If the accommodation is still considered to be suitable the council would be under no obligation to offer any further temporary accommodation. The applicant would then need to decide whether to accept the offer or to source alternative accommodation themselves.
- 7.2 If the specified reasons for refusal are considered to be valid, the offer would be withdrawn and alternative temporary accommodation options would be considered.
- 7.3 Where the council decides that homeless applicants housed under Section 189B are not owed the main homelessness duty, they will be asked to leave their interim accommodation placement following a reasonable notice period, once being informed of the council's decision in respect of their homeless application. The length of this notice period will vary depending on the household's individual situation.

8. Accommodation portfolio

- 8.1 The Council's approach is to ensure sufficient temporary accommodation is available to meet the demand of homeless households who apply for assistance, with the aim of accommodating homeless households within East Suffolk as far as reasonably practicable.
- 8.2 Demand for temporary accommodation is regularly monitored to assess whether there is sufficient availability within Waveney to meet need.

9. The council's temporary accommodation consists of:

- 9.1 In addition the council uses the following accommodation
- The council's own housing stock for temporary accommodation placements
 - Private Sector Leased properties managed by East Suffolk Council from private landlords
 - Access Community Trust Bascule House
 - Genesis Housing 1 x Emergency Bed for 14 days

- 2 x Emergency Beds for 28 days at Trafalgar House whilst assistance is given to secure long term accommodation
- Abigail Court
- Orwell Housing 6 units of self contained accommodator in Felixstowe and Woodbridge
- Genesis Housing 1 Short Term Emergency Placement – Felixstowe
- Premier Inn /Travel Lodge-Emergency
- Kingsley Guest House- Emergency
- Chequers Hotel- Emergency
- Station Hotel- Emergency
- Petit Port Norwich- Emergency

9.2 The council has agreements in place with Bed and Breakfast providers who are able to accept referrals and invoices from the Council and who have been assessed as being suitable for use as temporary accommodation.

9.3 Due to the small number of providers within East Suffolk, the council has agreements in place with Bed and Breakfast providers in Norwich, and Ipswich.

10. Implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Policy and associated resources

10.1 Demand for temporary accommodation is regularly monitored to assess whether there is sufficient availability within the East Suffolk District to meet need.

10.2 Consideration will be given to increasing the portfolio of accommodation to meet expanding demands on current temporary accommodation through:

- Acquisition of additional Private Sector Leased properties
- Solo

11. Performance monitoring and review


11.1 The Policy will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis or more frequently as changes in legislation, including benefits entitlement, may dictate.

12. Safeguarding

12.1 If the Housing Needs Officer becomes aware of any safeguarding concerns, the Officer should immediately speak to a Senior Housing Needs Officer/Housing Needs Manager who will advise on next steps.

13. GDPR

13.1 All staff in Housing Needs should ensure that at all times they consider the requirements of GDPR. This is particularly important when managing electronic data. It is essential that emails containing any personal information being sent externally are sent by secure emails and staff should be extra vigilant in ensuring they are emailing the correct person.

Version	Date	Amended	Approved by
1	19.09.18		
Housing Needs/Housing Solutions	05.10.18		Darren Knight