

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Health and Wellbeing Board

The meeting will be held at **10.30 am – 12:30pm on 5 August 2022**

Committee Room 2, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL
Hybrid meeting

Elected members

- Cllr D Huelin (Chair),
- Cllr B Johnson, Cllr S Ralph, Cllr S Liddiard, Cllr S Muldowney

Elected member substitutions as agreed at Full Council on 29 June 2022 comprise:

- Cllr Carter
- Cllr Halden

Wider membership

- Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health * (Ian Wake)
- Corporate Director of Children's Services * (Sheila Murphy)
- Director of Public Health* (Jo Broadbent)
- Executive Lead Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership & Joint Accountable Officer for its 5 CCGs (Anthony McKeever)*
- NHS Thurrock Alliance Director (Interim), MSE ICP (Stephen Porter)
- Chief Operating Officer HealthWatch Thurrock * (Kim James)
- Chair: Thurrock NHS Clinical Commissioning Group or a clinical representative from the Board (Dr Anil Kallil)
- Chair Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Board / Director Public Realm (Julie Rogers)
- Chair of the Adult Safeguarding Partnership or their senior representative (Jim Nicholson)
- Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership or their senior representative (Sheila Murphy)
- Director level representation of Thurrock, North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) (Gill Burns)
- Partnership Director, Thurrock Council, NELFT and EPUT (Rita Thakaria)
- Executive member, (Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust) Hannah Coffey / Michelle Stapleton)
- Executive Director of Community Services and Partnerships, Essex Partnership University Trust (EPUT) (Alex Green)
- Chief Executive Thurrock CVS (Kristina Jackson)
- Managing Director Fiona Ryan. Basildon & Thurrock University Hospital Trust
- HM Prison and Probation Service tbc
- Essex Police (Jenny Barnett CH/SUPT)

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Urgent Items

To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

3 Declaration of Interests

4 Minutes

5 - 12

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting held on 24 June 2022.

To consider the action and decision log. A condensed version of the action and decision log is included within members' papers. A fuller version including key discussion points will be considered at the meeting

5 Housing Strategy

13 - 230

Papers are included for members' consideration. A presentation will be provided to members at the meeting.

6 Children Looked After Needs Assessment

231 - 254

Papers are provided for members' consideration. A presentation will be provided to support the item at the meeting.

7 Essex Southend and Thurrock Dementia Strategy refresh

255 - 294

Papers are provided for members' consideration. The papers will be presented to members at the meeting.

8 Item(s) to be considered virtually

Board has agreed to consider some items virtually in the first instance, particularly items that are provided for member's information.

This agenda item provides for members to be notified of any items

upon which virtual consideration is requested.

Subject to member's approval any virtual papers will be circulated to members following the meeting.

9 Forward Planner HWB and Exec FINAL

295 - 302

This item provides members with sight of the forward work plan. Members invited to comment on proposed items and suggest items for Board's consideration at future meetings.

Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Darren Kristiansen, Business Manager - AHH Directorate by sending an email to DKristiansen@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **28 July 2022**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;
- Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and
- leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Agenda Item 4

PUBLIC Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 24 June 2022 10.30am-12.30pm

Present: Councillor Huelin (Chair)
Councillor Liddiard
Councillor Ralph
Ian Wake, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health
Jo Broadbent, Director of Public Health
Stephen Porter, Interim Director, Thurrock Alliance
Rita Thakaria, Partnership Director, Adults Health and Social
Care (Thurrock Council/EPUT/NELFT)
Kim James, Chief Operating Officer, Healthwatch Thurrock
Terry Fisher, Temporary Chief Inspector, Essex Police
Jim Nicolson, Adult Safeguarding Board

Apologies: Councillor Johnson
Councillor Muldowney
Julie Rogers, Chair Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Board / Director of Public Realm
Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director for Children's Services
Andrew Pike, Executive Member, Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust
Michelle Stapleton, Interim Director of Operations, Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust
Hannah Coffey, Executive Member, Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust
Kristina Jackson, Chief Executive, Thurrock CVS
Anthony McKeever, Interim Joint Accountable Officer for Mid and South Essex CCGs
Gill Burns, Director of Children's Services, Director, North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT)
Alex Green, Executive Director of Community Services and Partnerships, Essex Partnership University Trust (EPUT)
Dr Anil Kallil, Chair of Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
Stephen Mayo, Deputy Chief Nurse, Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
Karen Grinney, HM Prison and Probation Service

Guests: Ceri Armstrong, Thurrock Council

1. Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

Colleagues were welcomed and apologies were noted.

Members were reminded that Board meetings are now being held in person and were encouraged to physically attend to ensure quorate is met in the room.

2. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items raised in advance of the meeting.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting held on 18 March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

5. Health and Wellbeing Board Annual review of Terms of Reference (ToR)

This item was presented by Darren Kristiansen, Thurrock Council. Key points included:

- A commitment provided in the Board's Terms of Reference (ToR) is that it will be reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis.
- There is currently a review taking place which considers how Board will operate in the context of the MSE ICS going forward. The proposals in the ToR review are to ensure that the Board meets its obligation to review its ToR annually and are deemed consequential amendments. Any further review of the Boards' ToR to reflect the outcome of the review of Board will be subject to the Board's agreement at a future meeting.
- The proposed changes for consideration by Board include:
 - Amending the functions and job titles for Board membership where necessary, for example the Mid and South Essex (MSE) Integrated Care System (ICS) now providing representation in place of Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group;
 - The Chair and elected members of the Board are reviewed annually and selected by the Leader as part of determining Committee and Board memberships;
 - The introduction of an action and decision log to support the Board and provide an audit of decisions and approvals that have been taken;
 - The introduction of a flag system to provide presenters with a two-minute warning when their allocated time is concluding – this will help to ensure future agenda items do not overrun;
 - Each of the six themes of the Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Strategy are to be considered each Municipal year as part of driving forward the refreshed Strategy. One to two themes to be considered at each Board meeting;
 - For year one of the refreshed HWB Strategy, members are to be provided with focused items setting out the detail of each of

the themes and plans for delivering the outcomes over the life of the Strategy. Year two, beginning with the first meeting in June 2023, would provide an opportunity for Board members to receive reports on progress being made on each theme;

- Consideration to be given to elected members being able to nominate agreed substitutions to attend meetings when needed as is provided to wider members of the Board.

During discussions the following points were made:

- Members noted the upcoming roundtable event as part of the Health and Wellbeing Board review.
- It was recognised the ToR is an organic document and should therefore be updated to reflect the membership and operational changes outlined in the paper.
- Colleagues discussed the possibility of signing off key commissioning plans at future meetings, however, it was flagged this may be too detailed for the Board to consider and will be explored outside of the meeting.
- Members noted the Chair discussed the proposed operational changes with the secretariat to ensure this is reflected in the ToR. Members welcomed the introduction of an action and decision log.
- Members welcomed the focus of year one of the Strategy being related to the sharing of actions and decisions to drive the health agenda forward.

Action: Secretariat to liaise with the Chair of the Board to plan the sequencing of the themes for each meeting.

Decision: Members agreed the changes to the Terms of Reference as outlined within the report and subject to member's approval will be reflected in the Terms of Reference.

6. Better Care Together Thurrock - The Case for Further Change

This item was introduced by Ian Wake and Ceri Armstrong, Thurrock Council. Key points included:

- This is a key underpinning document for the Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Strategy and will act as the delivery mechanism for goals one and three.
- The Strategy sets out ambitious and detailed plans for transforming Thurrock's health, care, housing, and wellbeing services and provides a blue-print for service integration to form one place-based and integrated care system. It is both a transformation and aspirational Strategy as it is recognised not all elements have funding routes at present.
- The Strategy's overarching goal is to achieve 'better outcomes for individuals that take place close to home and make the best use of health and care resources' and is based on comprehensive engagement with partners, front line staff and residents.
- A key element of the document relates to failure demand and real-life case studies of the need for a single solution to often complex and multifaceted issues. Currently many functions are delivered by separate teams with different thresholds and referral criteria and is therefore fragmented. An individual in need of help often goes

through the system a number of times before help is given and as a result it is costly to the whole system.

- The Strategy describes an overall model of integrated care based on a Human Learning Systems (HLS). In adopting an HLS approach, the Strategy aims to transform radically the way that public service is delivered. Bureaucracy, assessment and onward referral will be kept to an absolute minimum, freeing up more time, capacity and resources to deliver front line care and empowering staff to be creative and innovative.
- The document includes an integrated care model, based on a strengths and assets approach, a mixed skilled clinical workforce, and a new vision for residential care. Integrated Locality Networks will be established and for residents with more complex needs, a single care plan will be developed. The expansion of Wellbeing Teams will allow for a home support model that is flexible, person-centred and focuses on delivering what matters to the person. In addition, this model has the potential to deliver savings to the NHS through delivery of better outcomes for residents, including avoiding subsequent GP and hospital usage.
- Population Health Management principles and the ongoing development of the Integrated Medical Centres also provide support for the integrated care model.
- The Strategy specifically involves the community and its assets which can have a very positive impact upon the delivery of solutions that support improved health and well-being in residents. For example, two Community of Practices will be set up, one resident led and a second for staff involved in the direct delivery of care. Upon evaluation of these Practices, these will then be rolled out to the four PCN footprints in Thurrock.

During discussions the following points were made:

- Members of the Board welcomed the Strategy, and all contributors were thanked for their involvement.
- It was recognised that external partners such as the Police can play a role in identifying needs of individuals they meet on the streets therefore pooling intelligence is key. For example, some residents in contact with the Police may feedback blockages with GP appointments. It was noted there is already ongoing work with Community Police and PCSOs attending local Talking Shops.
- Colleagues noted the importance of residents having access to various avenues to report health, wellbeing, and wider issues to allow all partners to work together in collaboration with service users.
- It was recognised that referral pathways still require further work, however, early intervention and prevention provide greater benefits to residents. The role of the coordinator is critical to accessing services, for example by asking residents the right questions to ascertain need.
- Members noted the Strategy complements the Making Safeguarding Personal initiative and colleagues welcomed the streamlining of processes.
- The Board recognised the Strategy underpins the HWB Strategy and reflects the needs of place which is being driven forward by the Thurrock Integrated Care Alliance.

Decision: Members approved the Better Care Together Thurrock

– The Case for Further Change as the delivery mechanism for delivery of goals one and three of Thurrock’s new Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

7. Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Strategy

This item was introduced by Jo Broadbent, Thurrock Council. Key points included:

- The Health and Wellbeing Board previously agreed that the Strategy would have a Vision of Levelling the Playing Field and tackling inequalities is reflected throughout the Strategy.
- Proposals to level the playing field have been developed based around six areas of people’s lives (Domains), that cover the wider determinants of health and impact on people’s health and wellbeing. These are:
 1. Staying Healthier for Longer
 2. Building Strong & Cohesive Communities
 3. Person-Led Health & Care
 4. Opportunity for All
 5. Housing & the Environment
 6. Community Safety
- The Strategy and subsequent Domains are underpinned by several other key strategies and groups, including:
 - Better Care Together – The Case for Further Change;
 - The Brighter Futures Strategy;
 - The Collaborative Communities Framework;
 - The Backing Thurrock Economic Strategy;
 - The Local Plan;
 - The Housing Strategy;
 - Thurrock Community Safety Partnership priorities.
- Through extensive engagement with residents and stakeholders, three to four priority goals have been identified for each Domain, with public feedback leading refinements of these goals. These set out specific actions to improve outcomes and specifically level the playing field and address inequalities.

During discussions the following points were made:

- Members of the Board welcomed close partnership working to develop the Strategy and all sectors were thanked for their commitment and engagement.
- It was noted the Strategy is a statutory document which partners will need to have due regard to therefore ensuring accountability and responsibility.
- Colleagues reiterated the good working relationships that have already been established, however tensions and challenges were acknowledged. These are being addressed as part of ‘critical friend’ discussions.
- Members noted the ongoing changes to NHS structures as part of the Health and Care Bill and the need for cognisance with the Health and Wellbeing Board going forward. It was reiterated colleagues within the

NHS wish to complement the work of partner organisations and avoid duplication.

- It was recognised that other partnerships within Thurrock, for example the Police are important as the refreshed Strategy has a focus on crime and anti-social behaviour as part of the wider determinants of health aspect. The Police continue to work collaboratively with partners and actively seek feedback from organisations on this partnership approach.
- As part of partnership information sharing, the Chair of the Board offered to provide some insight into the roles and responsibilities of a Councillor. It was acknowledged this will be particularly helpful for frontline staff. Discussion sessions will be coordinated via the Board secretariat.

Action: Secretariat to liaise with the Chair to arrange bespoke information sharing sessions for staff as required.

- Members reiterated their support for the refreshed HWB Strategy as all partners are signed up to its principles of creating better experiences and outcomes for the residents of Thurrock. Furthermore, the Strategy will inform policies and procedures within the ICS.

Decision: Members of the Board completed the following:

- Reviewed, commented on, and approved the final draft Strategy at Appendix 1, considering the proposed Domains and Goals;
- Reviewed, commented on, and approved the formats of the Accessible and EasyRead versions of the Strategy, and the Consultation Report (appendices 2-4);
- Reviewed, commented on and approved the plan to launch the Strategy as per the Communications Plan (Appendix 5).

The meeting finished at 12:10pm.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

Action number	Date Action Initiated	Agenda item	Action / Decision Details	Action owner	Action/ Decision	Relevant timescales	Action status	Update
1	24/06/22	Health and Wellbeing Board Annual review of Terms of Reference (ToR)	Secretariat to liaise with the Chair of the Board to plan the sequencing of the themes for each meeting.	Darren Kristiansen	Action	ASAP	Open	
2	24/06/22	Health and Wellbeing Board Annual review of Terms of Reference (ToR)	Members agreed the changes to the Terms of Reference as outlined within the report and subject to member's approval will be reflected in the Terms of Reference.	All	Decision	24/06/22	Closed	
3	24/06/22	Better Care Together Thurrock - The Case for Further Change	Members approved the Better Care Together Thurrock – The Case for Further Change as the delivery mechanism for delivery of goals one and three of Thurrock's new Health and Wellbeing Strategy.	All	Decision	24/06/22	Closed	
4	24/06/22	Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Secretariat to liaise with the Chair to arrange bespoke information sharing sessions for staff as required.	Darren Kristiansen	Action	Ongoing	Open	
5	24/06/22	Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Members of the Board completed the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed, commented on, and approved the final draft Strategy at Appendix 1, considering the proposed Domains and Goals; • Reviewed, commented on, and approved the formats of the Accessible and EasyRead versions of the Strategy, and the Consultation Report (appendices 2-4); • Reviewed, commented on and approved the plan to launch the Strategy as per the Communications Plan (Appendix 5). 	All	Decision	24/06/22	Closed	

5 August 2022	ITEM: 5
Health and Wellbeing Board	
Housing Strategies 2022-2027	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: None
Report of: Ryan Farmer – Housing Strategy and Quality Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Ewelina Sorbjan – Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Ian Wake – Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

As a local authority, it is important that Thurrock Council has a document that states its ambitions and goals regarding housing in the borough. The current Housing Strategy was adopted in Thurrock in 2015.

A new Housing Strategy has been developed which considers current legislation, regulation and market trends, the impact of recent welfare reforms, and new opportunities for meeting the housing needs of Thurrock’s residents whilst considering the turbulence and uncertainty brought about during and following COVID-19 pandemic.

This report summarises the strategic aims and objectives of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027. It also presents and summarises the strategic aims and objectives of two supporting strategies – the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 and the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027.

These documents were presented to Cabinet on 13 July 2022 and were approved.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1. It is recommended that Health and Wellbeing Board note and comment on the the vision, aims, objectives and actions outlined in the Housing Strategy 2022-2027.
- 1.2. It is also recommended that Health and Wellbeing Board note and comment on the aims, objectives and actions outlined in the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 and Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1. It is important that Thurrock Council has a document that shares the aims and ambitions of the organisation regarding housing in the borough.

The council adopted its previous Housing Strategy in 2015. It required renewal, considering changes in legislation and regulation, market trends, the impact of recent welfare reforms, and new opportunities for meeting the housing needs of Thurrock's residents. Unlike the previous strategy, it is necessary that this document also reflects the turbulence and uncertainty that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 2.2. The Housing Strategy addresses the range of tenures available in Thurrock - social housing, owner-occupiers, and the private rental sector. It is important to note that this strategy will consider housing need and services in the borough and the barriers residents may face with accessing safe and secure accommodation. The Housing Strategy does not analyse options or sites for housing provision.

- 2.3. Developed alongside the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 were two other critical documents for the Housing service, supporting and providing supplementary information. These are:

- the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027, which outlines the council's approach to managing, maintaining and investing in Housing assets to ensure that properties provide attractive, good quality council-owned homes for current and future residents
- the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027 which will sets the aims and ambitions of the Housing service in improving its interaction and communication with those who live in and around Thurrock Council's homes and neighbourhoods

3. Housing Vision

- 3.1. Housing and health are intrinsically linked. Access to a safe, secure, stable, warm, and affordable home will provide people with a solid foundation upon which they can better protect their health and support their wellbeing. If a home is lacking any of these factors, it will have a detrimental impact on the physical health, mental health, and general wellbeing of all those in the household.

A safe home can mean many things, such as being hazard free, or maintained in line with compliancy measures such as gas servicing and electrical testing. A safe home goes beyond physical maintenance and bricks and mortar; it can also relate to a resident's perception of safety in their home and in the neighbourhood or estate in which it is located.

- 3.2. A secure home can refer to the security of tenure, giving residents peace of mind and stability by having that solid foundation to build their vision of a good

life, or it can again be considered in like with the perception of safety within the home from any outside harms.

The factors that determine a suitable home are wide ranging and tailored to the housing needs of each household. It can relate to the size, type, location, and accessibility of a property, but can also refer to the standard in which the property is kept, ensuring good quality accommodation is provided and that it remains well maintained.

- 3.3. The definition for an affordable home is also aligned with the specific needs and commitments of every household. Affordability of home is linked with many wider consequences, such as fuel poverty and impacts on physical and mental wellbeing.

Health and wellbeing run through every aspect of this strategy. This document's strategic aims and objects are rooted in the fundamental aim of tackling health inequalities through housing to support Thurrock residents to live healthy lives.

- 3.4. With the above detail in mind, shared below is the vision for the Housing Strategy 2022-2027:

Every Thurrock resident will have access to a safe, secure, suitable, and affordable home that meets their needs and aspirations, serving as a foundation to support their health and wellbeing.

Residents will be supported at home and in their local area through connected services, neighbourhoods, localities, and communities to achieve their vision of a 'good life'.

- 3.5. This vision, as well as the following Housing principles, also underpin the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 and Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027.

4. Housing Principles

- 4.1. The Housing Strategy 2022-2027 has been developed in part to set the basis for a new way of working for housing support and services in Thurrock. This strategy, the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027, the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027, and the new way of working all follow the below eight principles:

4.1.1. What is important to you?

We work in partnership with residents to understand the things that matter to them in the context of their lives and the neighbourhoods in which they live.

4.1.2. Right time, right place and high quality

We work to provide people with services that are high quality, easy to access, and offer appropriate support.

4.1.3. Supports health and wellbeing

We will relentlessly focus on reducing health inequality. We will ensure that

resources are distributed in a way that accounts for variation in need at neighbourhood level

4.1.4. Minimises bureaucracy

The amount of resource we spend on bureaucracy is kept to a minimum ensuring maximum resources are available to provide people with the solutions they require.

4.1.5. Local, strength based solutions

Our solutions look to use the assets within neighbourhoods and do not consist only of the services we provide.

4.1.6. Doesn't break the law and meets statutory duties

We empower resident facing staff to make decisions in the context of each resident they serve rather than being constrained by thresholds and *one size fits all* service specifications.

4.1.7. Flexible and adaptable

We are flexible enough to respond and adapt delivery to changes in individual, neighbourhood and place circumstances

4.1.8. Partnership working and collaborations

Responsibility for housing is shared between individuals, neighbourhoods, our workforce and partners. We do '*with*', not '*to*'. We constantly co-design and co-produce.

5. Housing Strategy Aims and Objectives

- 5.1. The four aims and their respective objectives set out in the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 will support the council in achieving its housing vision. They also align with and support the work and actions identified within the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026 as well as the Better Care Together Thurrock: The Case for Further Change strategy.

The aims of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 are:

- Deliver Housing Support and Service
- Meet Housing Need
- Protect Resident Safety
- Strengthen Community Engagement and Empowerment

- 5.2. Information regarding each of these aims and their respective objectives are presented in this report. Further details regarding specific actions that have been proposed can be found within the draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027 document.

5.3. Deliver Housing Support and Services

5.3.1. This aim proposes a reframing of the approach taken to support households interacting with the council. Instead of viewing a set of 'problems' requiring resolution by disconnected teams, the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 encourages a strengths-based 'whole person' approach, connected within a wider system that includes adult social care, children's services, public health, NHS partners, the wider community, voluntary and faith sector, and existing assets within the community, that can all positively support people to live healthily and well.

5.3.2. The objectives within this section of the strategy are:

- Embed a person-centred approach to housing support and services
- Develop locality and neighbourhood models for integrated housing services

5.4. **Meet Housing Need**

5.4.1. Identifying and understanding housing need can be complex, and any unmet need can have a significant and lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of people. This aim sets an approach to use a range of information sources to build an accurate understanding of current and future housing need, creating the evidence base for directing housing development.

This aim considers how the council can explore, understand, and address the diverse housing needs of the borough's population. It also shares residents' priorities regarding the standard of homes in Thurrock and how homes can be developed and improved in the borough.

The development and quality of homes have direct relationships with the health and wellbeing of individuals. The adherence to suitable space standards, ample provision of affordable housing and the inclusion of appropriate green and open space in new developments will positively affect the lives of residents who will live there.

5.4.2. The objectives within this section of the strategy are:

- Identify and provide the right homes for Thurrock based on household need
- Address the housing affordability crisis in Thurrock
- Prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping in Thurrock
- Deliver sustainable estate and housing regeneration
- Review the model of Sheltered Housing provision

5.5. **Protect Resident Safety**

5.5.1. This aim is focused on protecting people and working to prevent them from experiencing harm to their physical and mental health. It considers the physical environment relating to property conditions, fuel poverty, property accessibility and adaptations, and harm experienced from anti-social behaviour, crime, and

domestic abuse. It also addresses and the general perception or feeling of safety in and around the home and neighbourhood.

The safety and security of residents in Thurrock are of paramount importance. They can be considered in two ways – the actions taken or required to protect physical safety and the actions taken or required to support people to feel safe. Although these are often aligned, it cannot be guaranteed that ensuring physical safety will result in a person feeling safe, and vice versa.

5.5.2. The objectives within this section of the strategy are:

- Improve warmth, safety, and standards in private sector homes
- Invest in and maintain quality council-owned homes
- Strengthen community safety and prevent anti-social behaviour
- Tackle domestic and sexual abuse and violence
- Support vulnerable adults and children
- Improve estate standards

5.6. **Strengthen Community Engagement and Empowerment**

5.6.1. The COVID-19 pandemic led people to experience significant periods of social isolation and separation from their friends, family, and wider support networks. It also saw communities come together, with people supporting one another through immensely challenging and testing circumstances. The collective strength and resilience showed within communities

This aim considers how relationships are built and strengthened between residents, the areas in which they live, the communities of which they are a part, and the organisations and groups that provide support and the council.

A significant ambition of this strategy is to support communities to build resilience and to broaden engagement with them. This strategy seeks to use the wider system and its networks to take an integrated approach in supporting communities, giving residents active and meaningful roles in matters that affect them in the context of housing and their estates and neighbourhoods.

5.6.2. The objectives within this section of the strategy are:

- Improve resident satisfaction and access to information
- Strengthen, integrate and diversify community and resident engagement

6. **Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027**

6.1. **Background**

6.1.1. Thurrock's Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 provides a framework detailing how the council will manage, maintain and invest in its assets, ensuring that they offer quality and affordable homes for current and

future residents. The strategy demonstrates how the council's housing portfolio will meet its priorities. It provides the strategic direction for those involved in the day-to-day management of the stock and future housing asset investment decisions.

This strategy aligns with the council's corporate values, the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 and the national policy context. It works alongside the HRA Business Plan in identifying the levels and timing of investment required to ensure the asset is maintained appropriately.

- 6.1.2. This strategy provides a set of guiding principles that allow the council to maintain and enhance its housing stock in both the short-term and the future. It ensures the council works transparently, keeping residents engaged throughout the processes and fosters a sense of joint ownership.

This strategy also recognises that for some assets, further investment may not represent the best value or meet the community's future needs. Buildings in this category would go through an asset review process that fully considers resident views. This full appraisal of the different options will inform the most appropriate decision for the future of the asset.

- 6.1.3. The council's strategic ambition is to ensure the delivery of good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods. The council seeks to invest in its assets and the local environment, creating places that support and promote the health, happiness and wellbeing of residents in the borough.

New and emerging legislation around building safety, decent homes standards and the net zero carbon agenda, in conjunction with an ageing stock, place significant financial pressures on the Housing Revenue Account. It is acknowledged that the council will need to explore external funding and continue to lobby central government for additional financial support to enable it to deliver this strategy.

6.2. **Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 Aims and Objectives**

- 6.2.1. The strategy demonstrates how the council can make the housing portfolio meet its priorities and those of supporting strategies. It responds to both national and corporate priorities as well as the feedback from residents. There are three core aims that will ensure the properties continue to offer good quality homes for current and future residents at an affordable cost.

- 6.2.2. The aims of the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 are:

- Deliver High Quality Homes
- Maximise the Value of Assets
- Plan for a Sustainable Future

Further details regarding specific actions that have been proposed can be found within the draft Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 document.

7. Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027

7.1. Background

- 7.1.1. The Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-27 sets out the aims and ambitions of the Housing service in improving its interaction and communication with those who live in and around Thurrock Council's homes and neighbourhoods.

The Housing service interacts with over 10,000 households across the borough across a broad range of services and recognises that each these households is unique. As a result of this diversity, those who access Housing services must have the opportunity for their voice and views to be listened to, not just heard.

- 7.1.2. The significance of meaningful engagement with residents may never have been higher than it is currently. The impact of and response to the tragedy at Grenfell Tower shows how important it is for residents and communities to be able to access information, express their views and opinions on changes, and play an active part in the way that duties are fulfilled and services are delivered by the Housing department.

This strategy aims to set the framework for future action, which is meaningful and valuable to residents and communities, reinforcing the understanding that residents and communities must be at the centre of all that the Housing service does.

- 7.1.3. The document seeks to establish an approach that will see resilient and respectful partnerships formed and maintained between the Housing department and those who access its services. The strategy sets aims to strengthen resident participation in the scrutiny and governance of the Housing service, which will offer greater transparency into how the Housing service operates.

Through this strategy, the Housing department lays the foundations to improve the experience residents and communities have when interacting with its services and further improve those services through continuous learning. This approach will ensure that the Housing department remains responsive, adaptable and flexible to residents' and communities broad and changing needs.

- 7.1.4. In developing this strategy, the Housing service has worked alongside its Excellence Panel, representing the residents who live in and around the Council's homes neighbourhoods.

7.2. Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027 Aims and Objectives

- 7.2.1. Five key aims have been identified through the process of designing and developing the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027. Together with their corresponding objectives, an action plan will be informed that addresses the engagement requirements set out in the regulatory framework

for social housing providers and meets the engagement standards as recommended by Tpas.

7.2.2. The aims of the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027 are:

- Strengthen Community Engagement and Empowerment
- Protect Resident Safety and Security
- Improve Communication and Interaction
- Enable Resident Scrutiny and Participation
- Deliver Opportunities for Engagement

Further details regarding specific actions that have been proposed can be found within the draft Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027 document.

8. Alignment with other strategic documents

8.1.1. The Housing Strategy 2022-2027, Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 and Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027 were not developed in isolation.

Due to the simultaneous development of the Thurrock Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026, the Local Plan and the Better Care Together Thurrock: The Case for Further Change strategy, it was possible to ensure that the development of the Housing strategies were undertaken with due regard and read across to these other key strategic documents.

8.1.2. Throughout the Housing Strategy reference is made to the aims and ambitions of these other documents. A significant degree of alignment has been achieved, providing a foundation for all documents to have a broader reach, greater influence, stronger acceptance and more opportunities to deliver successful outcomes than any single strategy could achieve in isolation.

9. Reasons for Recommendation

9.1. As outlined, the previous Housing Strategy had been adopted by the council, required a refresh as it was due for renewal in 2020.

9.2. Furthermore, the council requires documents such as the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 to ensure that housing assets receive appropriate levels of investment to maximise the amount of good quality homes available to residents, and such as the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027 to ensure that the residents are empowered to have their voices heard so that services are designed and provided that are fit for purpose and meet identified needs.

10. Engagement (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

10.1. Collaboration has been a key principle in the design and development of Housing strategies presented in this report. There was an aspiration for wide-

ranging consultation to take place with a variety of key partners and stakeholders and this was achieved within the guidance and legislation in effect during the engagement period between August 2021 and January 2022.

10.2. Those that collaborated in the development of these documents include:

- Residents of Thurrock
- Community forums and resident groups
- Elected members
- Council officers from a range of services, including Housing, Adults Social Care, Children's Services, Public Health, Planning, Regeneration and Housing Development
- NHS representatives
- Housing associations
- Partner organisations
- Organisations from the voluntary sector
- Other social housing providers

10.3. Examples of engagement activity used in the development of these strategies included face-to-face and online sessions with residents, council staff, partners and key stakeholders, online surveys, statistical analysis, Teams virtual briefings and workshops, and presentations to key Council services, committees and boards.

10.4. Specific activity with members of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee took place in October 2021 to ensure that all appropriate stakeholders and issues as identified by members could be included throughout the engagement period.

10.5. The draft strategic documents introduced by this report were presented to members of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 June 2022 and to Cabinet on 13 July 2022.

11. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

12. **Implications**

12.1. **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Strategic Lead – Corporate Finance

Through robust financial management and assessment of plans to improve existing stock, develop new housing and deliver housing services across the borough, the council will ensure that the Housing Strategy 2022-2027,

Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 and Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027 have the appropriate resources to deliver against the objectives and actions identified through the development stages.

12.2. **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Simon Scrowther**
Principal Lawyer, Litigation

The Deregulation Act 2015 abolished the statutory requirement for English authorities to produce a housing strategy as previously required by section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Meeting the Council's statutory housing obligations is reflected in the objectives of the housing strategy: statutory homelessness duty; provision of housing advice and landlord responsibilities.

The refreshed Housing Strategy 2022-2027, Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 and Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027 will ensure that the council is enabled and empowered to deliver on its statutory duties as both a local authority and a social housing provider, especially in light of pending changes to legislation and regulation proposed through the social housing white paper.

12.3. **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring officer

Engagement activity took place with other public bodies, voluntary organisations, service users and other identified stakeholders during the development of this new strategy is implemented. A broad range of stakeholders throughout the community were identified and involved in the activity to develop a holistic strategy. A Community Equality Impact Assessment will be completed prior to implementation of the strategy to identify and address any issues affecting those within the protected characteristics.

12.4. **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

Not applicable

13. Appendices to the report

- Draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027
- Draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027 Executive Summary
- Draft Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027
- Draft Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027

Report Author:

Ryan Farmer

Housing Strategy & Quality Manager

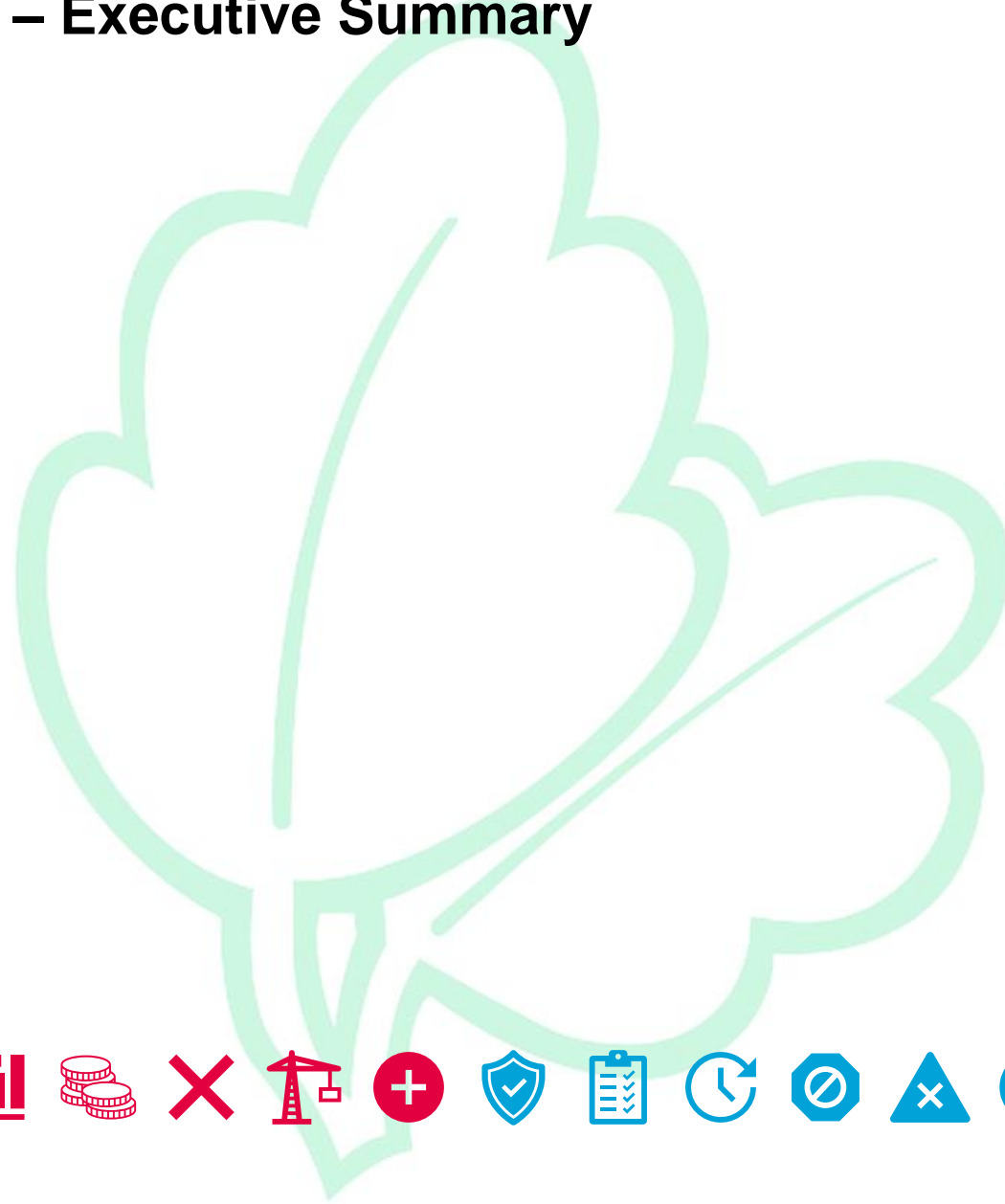
Business Improvement - Housing

Housing Strategy – Executive Summary

2022-2027

Thurrock Council

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Foreword

Everyone should have access to a safe, stable, secure and suitable home.

This Housing Strategy sets Thurrock Council's direction and ambitions for housing support and services for the next five years. Through this strategy, the council aims to provide a housing service that not only delivers on its targets but does so in the most human and empathetic way.

Crucially, this strategy delivers a new vision and key principles that truly place residents at the centre of all that we do. It aims to minimise bureaucracy, increase flexibility and focus more on what matters to residents.

Thurrock Council is on your side.

The council will work over the next five years and into the future to deliver housing support and services that are fit for purpose for families and individuals in the borough.

We are committed to effectively ending the need for any Thurrock resident to experience rough sleeping in our borough and will see to understand the true need for accommodation for Thurrock residents, delivering homes that people will be proud of accordingly.

We will prioritise and protect residents' safety in their homes and neighbourhoods, whether they live in a council-owned home or in the private sector, and we will work hard to ensure that all residents are empowered to have their voices heard through meaningful engagement.

I'm delighted with what our teams have managed to achieve over the past two years, despite the challenges faced.

119 new council-owned homes have been handed over and let, the number of families in out-of-borough temporary accommodation placements is at its lowest in over three years and ever-closer work between the housing service and other council departments means that more support and positive outcomes are being delivered for those who are most vulnerable in our communities.

The actions put forward in this strategy present an opportunity to go even further, with scope for major estate regeneration to provide more genuinely affordable council-owned homes, end out-of-borough placements entirely unless for safeguarding reasons or through choice, and deliver new integrated operating models in housing and with other partners to better focus on delivering the things that matter to residents in their different localities.

I look forward to seeing the successful delivery of the aims and objectives of this strategy as those within the council work closely with residents and partners across the public, private and third sectors.

Together, we can work to ensure that every Thurrock resident will have a home that meets their needs and aspirations, serving as a foundation to support their health and wellbeing and their springboard to achieve their vision of a 'good life'.



Cllr Luke Spillman
Cabinet Member for Housing





Introduction

It is important that Thurrock Council has a document that shares the aims and ambitions of the organisation regarding housing in the borough.

The council adopted its previous Housing Strategy in 2015.

It required renewal, considering changes in legislation and regulation, market trends, the impact of recent welfare reforms, and new opportunities for meeting the housing needs of Thurrock's residents.

Unlike the previous strategy, it is necessary that this document also reflects the turbulence and uncertainty that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Housing Strategy addresses the range of tenures available in Thurrock - social housing, owner-occupiers, and the private rental sector. It is important to note that this strategy will consider housing need and services in the borough and the barriers residents may face with accessing safe and secure accommodation. The Housing Strategy does not analyse options or sites for housing provision.





Corporate Context

Vision and overview of corporate priorities

The Housing Strategy is underpinned by Thurrock Council's vision and corporate priorities, adopted in January 2018. The council's vision is for Thurrock to be **an ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future**. Sitting alongside the vision are the three corporate priorities of People, Place and Prosperity.

People

A borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time

Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing

Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

The Housing Strategy must appropriately address and meet the challenges set within this priority. Resilient partnerships across sectors and empowered communities are integral to any Housing Strategy's meaningful development and success. They will ensure that services consistently meet and reflect those who use them.

Place

A heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future.

Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places

Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in

Fewer public buildings with better services

While the housing service has specific responsibility for maintaining and developing homes and neighbourhoods managed by the council, this strategy goes further to consider all tenure types. This strategy will improve understanding of strengths and needs across the borough, identifying the requirements for homes and infrastructure to support current and future Thurrock residents.

Prosperity

A borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy

Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all

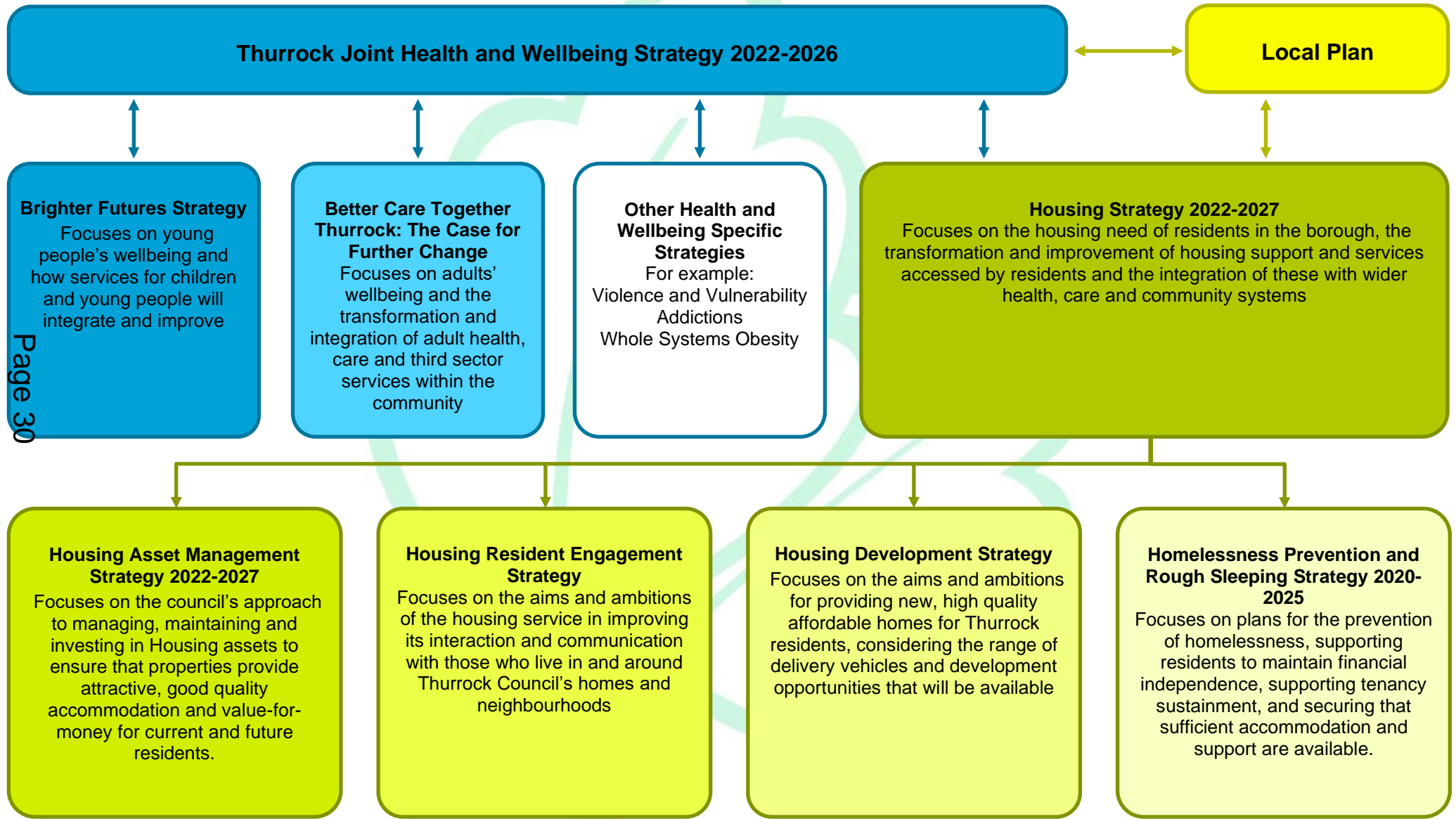
Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

The Housing Strategy aims to deliver opportunities for residents to achieve their aspirations, including accessing skills training with partner organisations. The strategy also seeks to expand relationships with other housing providers to increase affordable housing levels in the borough.





Strategic Context



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Strategic Context

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026

The Thurrock Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026 is the highest-level strategic document that describes our collective plans to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. The theme of the strategy is *Levelling the Playing Field*, and the strategy sets out high level actions to address health inequalities across six domains.

- Healthier for Longer including mental health
- Building Strong and Cohesive Communities
- Person Led Health and Care
- Opportunity For All
- Housing and the Environment
- Community Safety

As housing and the environment features as a domain of health inequality in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, there is a strong link with the aims and objectives of this Housing Strategy. Both documents will drive forward positive improvements for the health and wellbeing of Thurrock residents.

The local plan sets a vision and framework for the future development of Thurrock, drawn up by the local planning authority with wider engagement and consultation with the community.

Better Care Together Thurrock: The Case for Further Change

The *Case for Further Change* strategy sets out a collective plan to transform, improve and integrate health, care and third sector

services aimed at the borough’s adults and older people to improve their wellbeing. It has been developed and agreed by the Thurrock Integrated Care Alliance (TICA) and its partner organisations. Partners across Thurrock have a long history of working together to agree and deliver shared outcomes.

The *Case for Further Change* proposes a transformation from the current system architecture and ways of working to move instead towards integrated locality teams. It intends to create a single Integrated Locality Network of professionals who will be able to collaborate more easily and effectively with each other, and with residents. The overall aim is to embed the maximum amount of care and support at locality and neighbourhood level within a multi-disciplinary network of staff who can collaborate to design integrated solutions with residents rather than make onward referrals.

Local Plan

The local plan addresses many issues affecting local people. There are policies that cover development issues in relation to education, health, community safety and sustainable development. It also contains policies on more traditional, but important, planning activity such as housing, employment, leisure and sport, natural and historic environment, and community facilities.

Where the Housing Strategy sets strategic aims and objectives regarding housing need, the local plan supports the practicalities of providing new homes, through the identification for sites and areas where development is permitted and the creation of planning policy that meets priorities in the borough. The housing strategy will feed into the development of the new local plan, ensuring alignment.





Vision, Principles, Aims and Objectives

Housing Vision

Every Thurrock resident will have access to a safe, secure, suitable, and affordable home that meets their needs and aspirations, serving as a foundation to support their health and wellbeing.

Residents will be supported at home and in their local area through connected services, neighbourhoods, localities, and communities to achieve their vision of a 'good life'.

Housing and health are intrinsically linked. Access to a safe, secure, stable, warm, and affordable home will provide people with a solid foundation upon which they can better protect their health and support their wellbeing. If a home is lacking any of these factors, it will have a detrimental impact on the physical health, mental health, and general wellbeing of all those in the household.

A safe home can mean many things, such as being hazard free, or maintained in line with compliancy measures such as gas servicing and electrical testing. A safe home goes beyond physical maintenance and bricks and mortar; it can also relate to a resident's perception of safety in their home and in the neighbourhood or estate in which it is located.

A secure home can refer to the security of tenure, giving residents peace of mind and stability by having that solid foundation to build their vision of a good life, or it can again be considered in like with the perception of safety within the home from any outside harms.

The factors that determine a suitable home are wide ranging and tailored to the housing needs of each household. It can relate to the size, type, location, and accessibility of a property, but can also refer to the standard in which the property is kept, ensuring good quality accommodation is provided and that it remains well maintained.

The definition for an affordable home is also aligned with the specific needs and commitments of every household. Affordability of home is linked with many wider consequences, such as fuel poverty and impacts on physical and mental wellbeing

Health and wellbeing run through every aspect of this strategy. This document's strategic aims and objects are rooted in the fundamental aim of tackling health inequalities through housing to support Thurrock residents to live healthy lives.

The vision for the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 is aligned with the aims of Domain 5 – Housing and the Environment within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026, outlined below:

Fewer people will be at risk of homelessness, and everyone will have access to high quality affordable homes that meet the needs of Thurrock residents.

Homes and places in Thurrock will provide environments where everyone feels safe, healthy, connected and proud.





Vision, Principles, Aims and Objectives

Housing Core Principles

This Housing Strategy has been developed in part to set the basis for a new way of working for housing support and services in Thurrock. This strategy and the new way of working follow the below eight principles:

- We work in partnership with residents to understand the things that matter to them in the context of their lives and the neighbourhoods in which they live.

What is important to you?



- We work to provide people with services that are high quality, easy to access, and offer appropriate support.

Right time, right place and high quality



- We will relentlessly focus on reducing health inequality. We will ensure that resources are distributed in a way that accounts for variation in need at neighbourhood level.

Supports health and wellbeing



- The amount of resource we spend on bureaucracy is kept to a minimum ensuring maximum resources are available to provide people with the solutions they require.

Minimises bureaucracy



- Our solutions look to use the assets within neighbourhoods and do not consist only of the services we provide.

Local, strength based solutions



- We empower resident facing staff to make decisions in the context of each resident they serve rather than being constrained by thresholds and *one size fits all* service specifications.

Doesn't break the law and meets statutory duties



- We are flexible enough to respond and adapt delivery to changes in individual, neighbourhood and place circumstances

Flexible and adaptable



- Responsibility for housing is shared between individuals, neighbourhoods, our workforce and partners. We do *'with'*, not *'to'*. We constantly co-design and co-produce.

Partnership working and collaborations





Vision, Principles, Aims and Objectives

Housing Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives set out in this strategy will support the council in achieving its housing vision. They also align with and support the work and actions identified within the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy as well as the Better Care Together Thurrock: The Case for Further Change strategy.

Deliver Housing Support and Services

- Embed a person-centred approach to housing support and services
- Develop locality and neighbourhood models for integrated housing services

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Meet Housing Need

- Identify and provide the right homes for Thurrock based on household need
- Address the housing affordability crisis in Thurrock
- Prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping in Thurrock
- Deliver sustainable estate and housing regeneration
- Review the model of Sheltered Housing provision



Protect Resident Safety

- Improve warmth, safety, and standards in private sector homes
- Invest in and maintain quality council-owned homes
- Strengthen community safety and prevent anti-social behaviour
- Tackle domestic and sexual abuse and violence
- Support vulnerable adults and children
- Improve estate standards



Strengthen Community Engagement and Empowerment

- Improve resident satisfaction and access to information
- Strengthen, integrate and diversify community and resident engagement





Legislative and Regulatory Framework

The Housing Strategy has been developed within and reflects current legislation and regulation.

Legislation

Thurrock Council has many housing duties and responsibilities, with only some of these relating to its role as a social housing provider. The council has duties towards homelessness prevention and relief, enforcing property standards and licensing in the private rental sector, and strategic assessments of the borough's current and future housing needs.

At the time of writing this strategy, there a number of new acts and proposed bills that will affect the way that housing support and services are provided during the expected lifetime of this strategy.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act aims to raise awareness and understanding about the impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families. It intends to further improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice. It also aims to strengthen the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies.

Fire Safety Act 2021

The Fire Safety Act places additional duties on responsible persons for multi-occupancy residential buildings, with the legal responsibility of proactively identifying potentially dangerous external wall systems and other structural issues and putting in place measures to deal with them. Responsible persons must make sure that they are up to date with government guidance regarding dealing with dangerous external

wall systems and, where necessary, that they engage with competent fire safety professionals to make sure the steps they are taking are suitable and sufficient to deal with the risks posed.

Building Safety Bill

The objective of the Building Safety Bill is to strengthen the overall regulatory system for building safety. It aims to establish a comprehensive new building safety regime concerning the design, construction, and occupation of higher-risk buildings. It aims to achieve this by ensuring there is greater accountability and responsibility for the design and construction of buildings, as well as throughout the lifecycle of buildings.

Social Housing Regulation Bill

The Social Housing Regulation Bill aims to deliver against the commitments made in the social housing white paper for those who live in poor quality social housing. It makes provision for residents to be given performance information so landlords can be held to account and aims to ensure that when residents make a complaint, landlords take quick and effective action to put things right.

In general, new legislation, and in particular new regulation, bring new duties, responsibilities, and burdens on the council. This can pose a risk due to the need to understand and implement measures correctly. Such activity can cause confusion and distraction from service delivery during initial rollout and embedding, and new reporting requirements can be cumbersome and resource intensive. The effective use of technology and analytics applications can go a long way to reducing the level of manual effort required in such circumstances.



The full impact of new regulation and legislation cannot be completely understood until sometime after implementation.

However, changing legislation and regulation also provide opportunities to better meet the needs of residents, and in the longer term should improve the level of service and support offered. New legislation can tackle long-standing issues that prevent positive outcomes for residents, as evidenced through the changes introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act.

The list below is not exhaustive; however, it indicates other significant legislation that set the council's housing responsibilities.

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1996
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Local Government Act 2000
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Housing Act 2004
- Equality Act 2006
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
- Localism Act 2011
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Housing and Planning Act 2016
- Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Homes Fit for Human Habitation Act 2018

Regulation

At present, the Regulator of Social Housing has set four consumer standards and will intervene where failure to adhere to the standards has caused or would risk causing serious harm to tenants. As a social housing provider, the council must adhere to these standards.

The four consumer standards are:

- Homes Standard
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Tenancy Standard
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

The Regulator of Social Housing has also set three economic standards. However only the rent standard is currently applicable to the council as a local authority. This standard establishes the maximum weekly social and affordable rents that social landlords can charge.

There are current proposals to introduce a Social Housing Regulation Bill, which would deliver changes to the consumer regulation of social housing. It would strengthen the accountability of landlords for providing safe homes, quality services and treating residents with respect. It would also implement some specific changes to the economic regulation of social housing. These are likely to be introduced during the lifetime of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027.





National Context

The housing landscape is ever-changing, impacted by alterations to government policy, periods of economic change, noteworthy events in the housing sector and other national influences.

Whilst Thurrock does have localised challenges, some of which are outlined in the next section, the strategic approach towards housing in the borough is equally affected by the national context.

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The Charter for Social Housing Residents

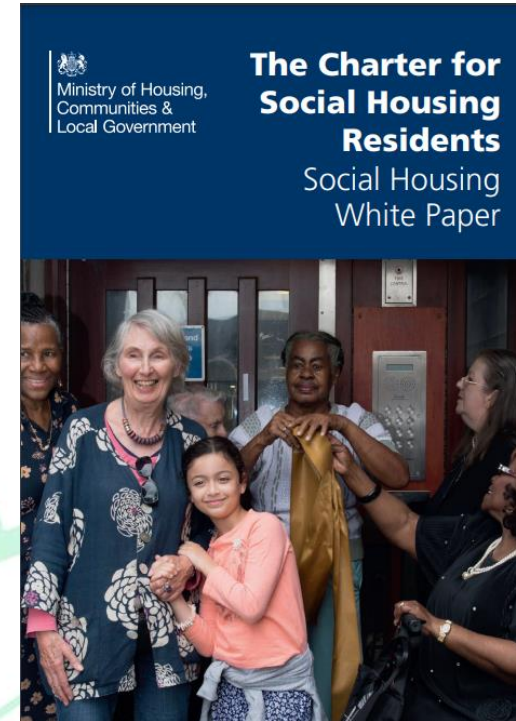
In late 2020 the Government published its social housing white paper, The Charter for Social Housing Residents. Within this document, the Government set out its intentions to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when required.

The charter outlines the following seven elements that every social housing resident should be able to expect:

- to be safe in your home
- to know how your landlord is performing
- to have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- to be treated with respect
- to have your voice heard by your landlord
- to have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- to be supported to take your first step into ownership

Further to establishing these aspects, the Government announced plans to strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing. It aims to empower the regulator to be proactive in monitoring and enforcing the consumer standards that social housing landlords are held to, and requiring landlords to:

- be transparent about their performance and decision-making so that tenants and the regulator can hold them to account
- put things right when they go wrong
- listen to tenants through effective engagement



Building and Fire Safety

The Grenfell Tower Fire brought both fire and building safety into sharp focus for housing providers, building managers and residents of high-rise properties across the country. The tragedy triggered a wave of activity, such as the commissioning of a review of building regulations and fire safety led by Dame Judith Hackitt.

Published in May 2018, *Building a Safer Future: Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety* set out over 50 recommendations for government.

The report drew particular attention to the importance of engaging with residents, strategies for engagement, and ensuring that residents had access to information and involvement in decision making.



The council's duties and obligations relating to building and fire safety are likely to be broadened in the coming months and years due to the progression of the Building Safety Bill and the commencement of the Fire Safety Act 2021. As such, the Housing Strategy must respond to these and flex with any newly introduced duties or responsibilities.

Climate Change and Sustainability

The Climate Change Act 2008 set a target in legislation to reduce UK emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses to net-zero by 2050. More recently, measures have been introduced to support this aim, such as the intention to phase out gas-fired boilers in new properties by 2035 and increase the use of electric vehicles across the country by mandating that all new homes must have charging points provided.

In October 2019, Thurrock Council passed a motion whereby it declared a climate emergency and set out to take urgent action to reduce its carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030. Initial plans are being developed to respond to the climate crisis by ensuring that council operations are carbon-neutral by this time. As a social housing provider with around 10,000 properties in its stock, to achieve net-zero by 2050, many significant financial and logistical challenges will need to be addressed.

COVID-19 and Housing

Concerns remain across the Housing sector that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on housing and homelessness has not yet fully emerged.

Initiatives such as 'Everyone In' and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and legislation to temporarily ban evictions and extend eviction notice periods, provided some stability and security to

households during significant uncertainty throughout much of 2020 and 2021, but these were not permanent resolutions.

With these temporary protections now removed and considering growing inflation levels and household costs, there are fears of a surge of households experiencing financial hardship and, therefore, at risk of homelessness. The full extent of the impacts on the private rental sector and the broader housing market in Thurrock is uncertain; however, the Housing Strategy aims to consider these factors to adapt and respond in the event of any such spike.

Levelling Up White Paper

The Levelling Up White Paper outlines 12 'missions across four broad areas with the aim to reduce inequality and transform the UK by spreading opportunity and prosperity. These areas are:

- boosting productivity and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging
- spreading opportunities and improving public services, especially in those areas where they are weakest
- restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost
- empowering local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

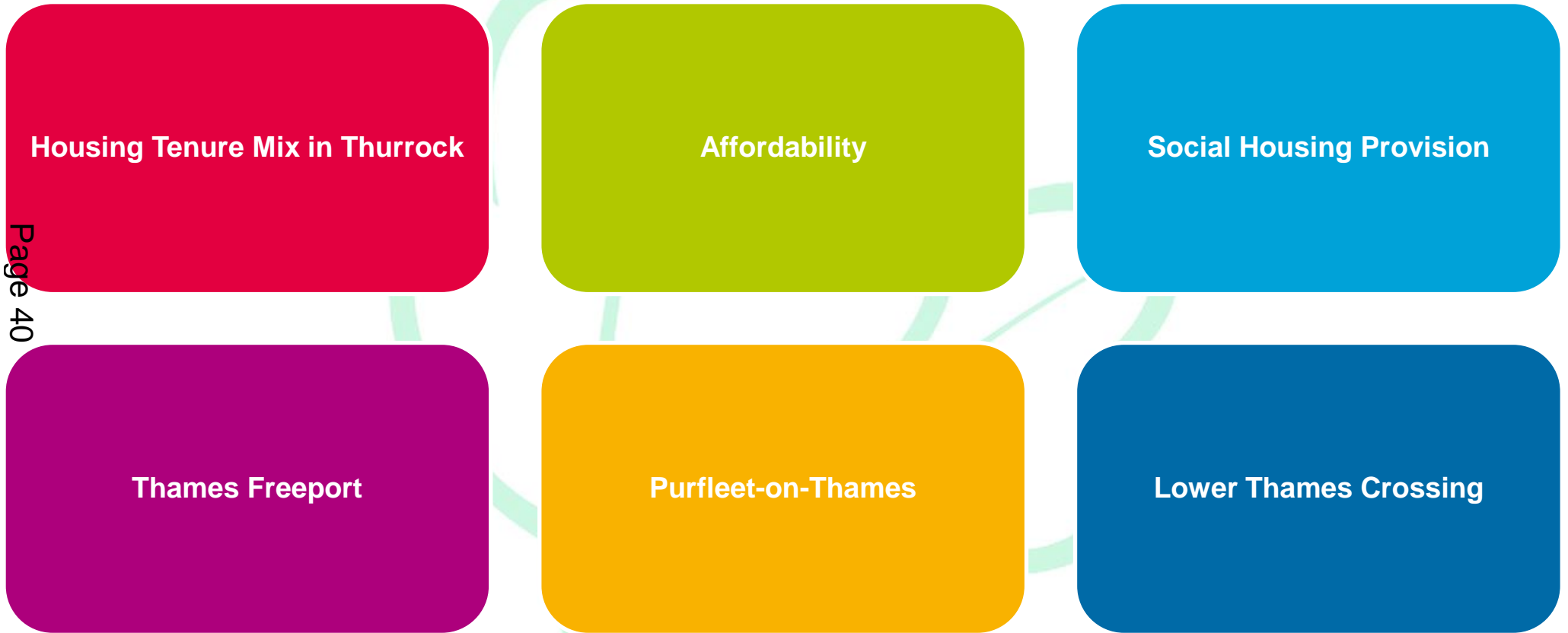
It also sets an aim under mission 10 that by 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas and an ambition for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest-performing areas.





Local Context

There are a number of factors that specifically impact upon housing within Thurrock. These factors relate closely to the affordability of housing in the local area, and is determined in part by the mix, supply and availability of different tenure types. The factors set out in this section can be seen below.



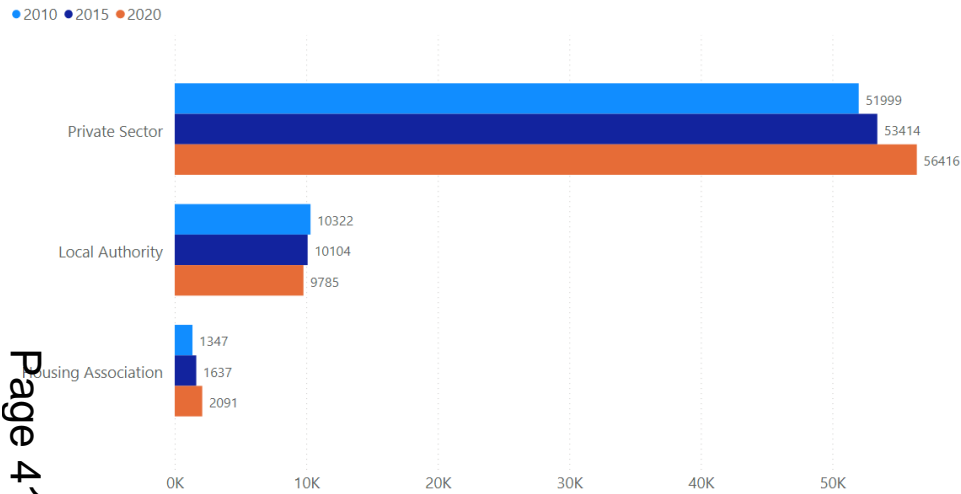
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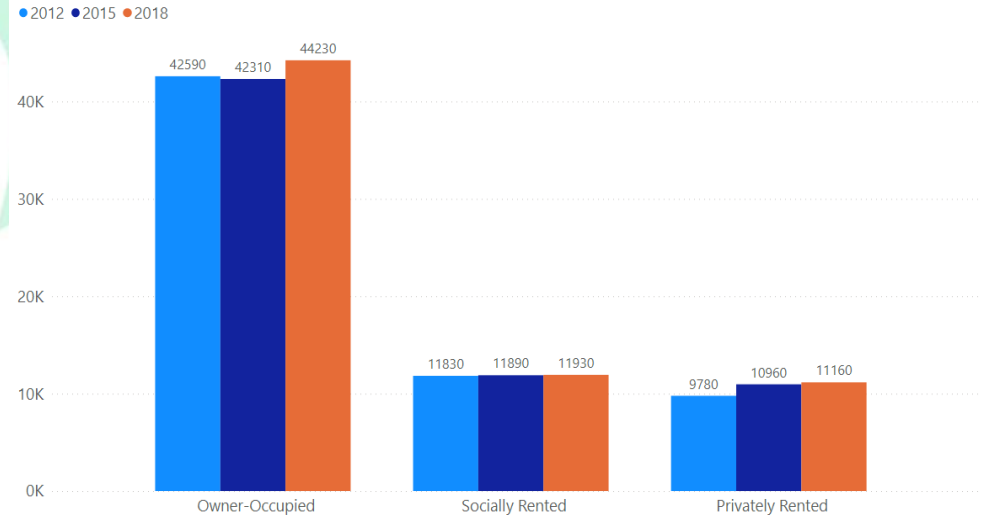
Housing Tenure Mix in Thurrock

The chart below provides estimates of the number of dwellings in Thurrock, broken down by ownership type.

Number of Dwellings by Ownership Type



ONS Estimated Number of Dwellings by Tenure



Alternative estimates by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicate the split between privately rented properties and those occupied by the owner. It should be noted that these are not official statistics, but they do provide an illustrative figure for comparison. In this chart, socially rented refers to the combined number of dwellings owned by the local authority and those owned by housing associations.

Affordability and Social Housing Provision

Affordability of accommodation in Thurrock is an ongoing challenge, both in the private rental sector and for those aiming to purchase properties.

In Thurrock, the council is the primary provider of social housing. Based on data published by MHCLG (now DLUHC), as of 31 March 2020, it was estimated that 14.3% of dwellings in Thurrock were owned by the council, with other registered providers of social housing owning less than 3.1% of homes in the borough.

The impact of these figures means that for every 47 council-owned dwellings, there were 10 registered provider-owned dwellings, representing the fifth-lowest ratio for stock-retaining local authorities in England at the time of writing.

Although the number of registered provider-owned dwellings has been increasing over time, this imbalance has led to additional pressure and demand on Thurrock Council from households as it is seen to be the primary provider of affordable accommodation in the borough.

Thames Freeport

It was announced in October 2021 that the Thames Freeport, one of eight announced in the UK, would be able to commence operations. It is anticipated to deliver transformational change across the entire borough, creating thousands of new jobs and attracting substantial investment into Thurrock over the next 25 years.

The successful delivery of the Thames Freeport in Thurrock is expected to contribute significantly to achieving wider place agenda ambitions. It will bring together physical, economic, social, and environmental renewal to improve the wellbeing of communities, provide opportunities and help ensure places are fit for the future.

The expected creation of jobs is likely to impact housing need in the local area. As the Thames Freeport develops and progress on the Local Plan continues, it is expected that this impact can be quantified, and measures identified to address housing need.

Purfleet-on-Thames

Purfleet Centre Regeneration Limited is a joint venture between Urban Catalyst and Swan Housing in partnership with Thurrock Council to regenerate over 140 acres to create Purfleet-on-Thames.

Developed on healthy town principles, Purfleet-on-Thames will create a new waterfront destination on the River Thames; an international creative hub and high quality new residential with place making at its core. The vision for Purfleet-on-Thames includes:

- A state-of-the-art film and TV studio facility and related creative industry hub
- Attractive new waterfront commercial and retail space
- Up to 2,850 new homes, including significant health and education facilities
- Community facilities, leisure uses and upgraded and additional public transport facilities

Lower Thames Crossing

National Highways proposes building a new Lower Thames Crossing that will include a major highway through Thurrock. Project proposals include two new 2.5-mile tunnels under the River Thames, 14.5 miles of new road and the construction and alteration of structures, including bridges, buildings, utilities, and tunnels.

The proposals for the Lower Thames Crossing have been assessed as directly and substantially compromising the ability to meet the need for new housing in Thurrock in a sustainable manner. It would lead to the direct loss of approximately 20 existing dwellings, and it is estimated that 1,400 homes would be affected by blight.

The impact on local housing would not only be affected upon completion of the project. During the construction phases of the Lower Thames Crossing, there will be the need for accommodation for over 900 workers involved with the construction of the northern parts of the project in Thurrock. It is expected that this need would be met through a combination of rented properties visitor accommodation such as hotels and owner-occupied homes. This would significantly increase demand and may negatively impact affordability and supply for Thurrock residents and may be a matter of significant concern should the Lower Thames Crossing construction project be awarded a Development Consent Order.



Deliver Housing Support and Services



This chapter proposes a reframing of the approach taken to support households interacting with the council. Instead of viewing a set of ‘problems’ requiring resolution by disconnected teams, the Housing Strategy encourages a strengths-based ‘whole person’ approach, connected within a wider system that includes adult social care, children’s services, public health, NHS partners, the wider community, voluntary and faith sector, and existing assets within the community, that can all positively support people to live healthily and well.

Embed a person-centred approach to housing support and services

Thurrock residents approach and interact with council services, delivery partners and other organisations regarding a range of housing-related matters every day. Whilst all will aim to help within their defined remit, the current approach can create barriers to success as few challenges can be appropriately addressed by any one party in isolation.

Homelessness, for example, cannot be addressed in Thurrock solely by the housing service of the council – it requires far greater collaboration and partnership, and all those working alongside individuals and households to see ‘whole human beings’ with their strengths.

This strength-based ‘whole person’ approach should be embraced and adopted by those working with residents in the borough.

Rather than responding to people approaching the council as a collection of fragmented teams and services, each trying to tackle their own ‘problem’, it is intended that we move in a direction where parties are connected and operating within a wider system beyond traditional organisational boundaries. Housing forms one part of this, alongside others such as adult social care, children’s services, public health, NHS partners, the wider community, voluntary and faith sector, and existing assets within the community.

When viewing an individual or household through the lens of a wider system, greater opportunities are available for the coordination of more holistic approaches to support relating to their housing need and other personal circumstances, which also complement their strengths.

As teams and services operate within this broader system, every interaction with a resident or household will present an opportunity for continuous engagement, learning, and improvement. This can be in the context of supporting those individuals by learning about the barriers preventing positive outcomes and designing ways to overcome them, or by identifying systemic issues through shared experience and practice that would require wider resolution.

What will we do?

We will embed the housing core principles and person-centred approach to housing services in service provision in order to provide tailored and bespoke support to residents

We will reduce bureaucracy in order to deliver outcomes that matter to residents at pace

We will adopt a whole system approach to supporting residents in order to reduce fragmentation and duplication of services





Develop locality and neighbourhood models for integrated housing services

Housing support, much like public services more broadly, is often fragmented into specific areas that each focus on resolving single 'problems'. However, people want to be recognised and supported by a system that views them as a complex individual aiming to achieve their vision of a good life.

Thresholds and eligibility criteria exist across the public sector, and housing support and services are no exception. Support may only be provided to those identified as 'eligible', and that support is often standardised and focussed solely on one single need, determined on a borough-wide level.

People are likely to have multiple interconnected needs that would benefit from the support of multiple teams or organisations, but the current approach to obtaining that support is often lengthy, fragmented and features with elements of duplication. Support is often provided through formal services when community organisations and assets may already exist to be able to meet these needs.

During the time that an individual attempts to navigate referral pathways and evidence their eligibility, it is highly likely that the need for housing support will become greater. This in turn will exacerbate any other connected or related support need, driving the individual towards crisis rather than prevention or early intervention.

This way of working increases rather than manages demand. It increases bureaucracy, costs, delays and wasted resource and has negative impacts on those seeking and providing support.

The *Better Care Together Thurrock: Case for Further Change* strategic document seeks to address this issue, primarily from a health and care perspective, however it combines this with a broader

view to also include other areas that can affect (or can be affected) by these needs. One such area relates to housing.

The *Case for Further Change* proposes a transformation from the current system architecture and ways of working to move instead towards integrated locality teams. It intends to create a single Integrated Locality Network of professionals who will be able to collaborate more easily and effectively with each other, and with residents. The overall aim is to embed the maximum amount of care and support at locality and neighbourhood level within a multi-disciplinary network of staff who can collaborate to design integrated solutions with residents rather than make onward referrals.

The *Case for Further Change* suggests the incorporation of specific housing services into these Integrated Locality Networks, and the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 supports this intention.

What will we do?

We will develop a neighbourhood model for housing services in order to better focus on delivering what matters to residents in different localities

We will expand housing locality working into the Integrated Locality Network in order to collaborate more effectively with residents and other professionals

We will expand the knowledge and skills of housing staff in order to better support residents

We will create new Community Case worker 'blended roles' able to co-design integrated, bespoke solutions with residents





Meet Housing Need

Identifying and understanding housing need can be complex, and any unmet need can have a significant and lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of people. This chapter sets an approach to use a range of information sources to build an accurate understanding of current and future housing need, creating the evidence base for directing housing development.

This chapter considers how the council can explore, understand, and address the diverse housing needs of the borough's population. It also shares residents' priorities regarding the standard of homes in Thurrock and how homes can be developed and improved in the borough.

The development and quality of homes have direct relationships with the health and wellbeing of individuals. The adherence to suitable space standards, ample provision of affordable housing and the inclusion of appropriate green and open space in new developments will positively affect the lives of residents who will live there

Identify and provide the right homes for Thurrock based on household need

Every household has a housing need that is aligned to and reflective of their circumstances at that point in time

During the engagement and development of this strategy, many residents were concerned that the right types of accommodation were insufficiently available to meet their needs. Affordability was cited as one of the most significant barriers to securing accommodation within Thurrock with growing inflation, increasing household costs and the continuation of welfare reforms placing incomes under pressure. Residents also highlighted difficulties in accessing adapted or adaptable properties in the borough.

Based on the council's housing register data, the greatest demand is for two-bedroom properties, followed by one-bedroom properties.

The most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was produced in 2017. A SHMA is a technical study intended to help the council's planning and housing services to understand how many homes will be needed during the assessment period – in this case, between 2014 and 2037.

The 2017 assessment indicated an objectively assessed need of 1074 to 1381 properties per annum across all tenures for Thurrock between 2014 and 2037, identifying a net annual affordable housing need of 472 new dwellings. The proportions for the required property sizes identified through the SHMA are shared in the chart below.

There are significant variations between the proportions suggested by the existing SHMA and the data available for the council's housing register. It should be noted that the SHMA considers the housing need for the entire current and future population of Thurrock and recommends that the council continues to monitor the number of bedrooms required by households in priority need on the housing registers.

There is a clear need for good quality, sustainable and affordable housing to be provided in the borough. It is key to the wider growth agenda, enabling residents to live healthy and well lives and means that local residents are available to take up the new employment opportunities created by growth in the borough.



As a social housing provider, the council has a pipeline of future development projects aligned with identified local need.

Following the abolition of the HRA borrowing cap in October 2018 Thurrock Council, as a local authority with an HRA, is no longer constrained by government controls over borrowing for housebuilding. Instead, the council is now able to borrow against their expected rental income.

Additional flexibilities regarding the use of Right to Buy sales receipts mean that there will be wider scope to fund the development of new council-owned homes, and there is currently a pipeline of future projects aligned with identified local need that can now be taken forward.

Given the demand for smaller sized properties as evidenced within this strategy, much of the focus of council-owned developments in the near future is anticipated to primarily be one and two-bedroom homes; however, there will be a mix of homes including three and four-bedroom developments for growing families which can in turn make smaller homes available to be relet where the new occupiers are moving from an existing council-owned property.

Thurrock Regeneration Ltd (TRL) offers another route for the provision of new, high-quality housing across the borough. As a development company set-up and funded by loans from Thurrock Council, it can deliver properties for market sale, private rent, affordable rent and shared ownership, and then reinvest any profits into further housing development or to support services. TRL can support brownfield redevelopment and ensure that sites can be taken forward where other developers may be deterred by feasibility by accessing funding

via partners such as the local enterprise partnership, the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA), and Homes England.

However, the council cannot meet the needs of all households in Thurrock in isolation. As such, work is needed to encourage and attract other registered providers of social housing and housing developers to construct homes in the borough, either directly or through joint ventures with the council, to meet the needs evidenced through local analysis and in the strategic housing market assessment.

What will we do?

We will use housing knowledge and data to influence and support the development of the Local Plan to ensure that future planning policy is representative of the needs of Thurrock residents

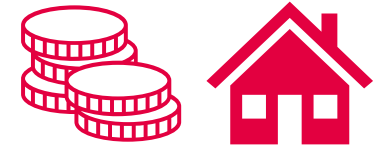
We will identify and understand housing need in Thurrock in order to deliver at least 500 new social and affordable homes for households in the borough

We will build homes that can respond and adapt to changing housing needs throughout life in order to ensure individuals live independently in suitable accommodation for longer

We will examine and tackle the factors leading to discrimination in housing that limit and prevent access to accommodation and implement a plan to tackle these

We will deliver and refresh the council's housing development programme in order to identify new opportunities to provide more social homes for rent





Address the housing affordability crisis in Thurrock

Nationally, housing affordability has worsened over the past 20 years, with London and the South East containing some of the country's most unaffordable areas. There has been a decline in the proportion of owner occupiers and an increase in the proportion of people in private rented accommodation.

While private rental has advantages such as greater flexibility to move home, currently the sector also contains the highest proportion of poor-quality homes, offers the least stability, and is the most expensive relative to the monthly cost of social rent and mortgages.

Although definitions and schemes exist to explain what affordable housing can be, there is no single methodology or model for determining what constitutes 'affordable' housing.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework, published in July 2021 goes into detail for four categories, referring to schemes and models such as shared ownership, equity loans, social rent, and affordable rent. However, many of these 'affordable' housing products would not be affordable to lower-income households.

There are a range of models for 'affordability', however the greatest challenge in defining affordability is that it is subjective and heavily influenced by each household's circumstances and housing needs. Determining what 'affordable' means based solely on market rents does not consider the disparity between the incomes of households, nor does it consider the source of those incomes.

Affordability concerns are prevalent for those wanting to buy in Thurrock. There is likely to be a considerable number of households for whom home ownership is not an option, in turn increasing the number of households looking to privately rent or socially rent. There is a need to ensure that these options are available and affordable for

these households. There is also a need to ensure that these options are of suitable quality and security to mitigate against potential poor health effects of unhealthy housing.

There is then the challenge of households living in properties that may be deemed affordable, but that comes at the cost of quality, standard of living and decency of accommodation.

Based on analysis, it was observed that single full-time workers appear to be more likely to find one-bedroom properties affordable within the private rental sector; however, for other property sizes, and for other worker types across property sizes affordability is significantly impacted.

Households with two earners where at least one is a full-time worker will find the private rental market more affordable. For households with no full-time earners, accessing properties with median market rents is extremely unaffordable.

What will we do?
We will introduce and maintain a 'Thurrock Affordability Standard' in order to accurately inform service delivery, policy design and housing development
We will deliver at least 500 new council-owned homes by 2027
We will maximise the delivery of genuinely affordable housing in new developments in order to boost access and availability
We will support households to maximise their income in order to increase the range of affordable housing options
We will establish a social lettings agency for Thurrock in order to expand private housing options for residents





Prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping in Thurrock

Homelessness is a complex societal issue. The impact on the lives of individuals and households, and the response required from public and third sector organisations is significant.

Homelessness detrimentally affects the physical and mental health and wellbeing of individuals, impacts their access to health and care services, is a factor in increased drug and alcohol misuse, and disrupts the work, education, and support networks of households.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 saw the council experience an increase in the number of households approaching the organisation for assistance regarding homelessness.

A reduction in assessments can be observed after the end of the 2019/20 reporting year can be directly and primarily attributed to the impact of measures implemented by the Government to support people to remain in secure and settled accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures included the extension of eviction notice periods, which returned to pre-pandemic lengths in October 2021, and the prevention of bailiff enforced evictions that was lifted in May 2021.

In 2018/19 and 2019/20, households approaching the council for a homelessness assessment were more likely to be owed the prevention duty as they were threatened with homelessness, rather than the prevention duty that would have been owed if they were experiencing homelessness.

In 2020/21 this balance reversed, with more households owed the relief duty than the prevention duty. As already outlined, during the COVID-19 pandemic support was in place to keep renters and homeowners in their settled homes, including mortgage payment

holidays, leading to fewer households facing homelessness due to the threat of eviction or repossession.

These reasons for homelessness tend to have advanced warning or notice, meaning that action can be taken to sustain tenancies; however, other reasons for the loss of accommodation require swifter support and action.

There was a sharp reduction after March 2020 in the proportion of households owed prevention or relief duties due to the end of a private rental sector tenancy. Family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate remained the most prevalent reason for the actual or threat of loss of settled accommodation in Thurrock, with the proportion increasing noticeably in the 2020/21 financial year.

Correlating with the protections for private rental sector tenants, a reduction in the proportion of the loss of private rental sector accommodation can be seen from 2020/21 compared to previous years. Over the past two years, the largest proportion of those owed the prevention and relief duties were those living with family.

The proportion of single adult males and single adult females seeking assistance have generally increased over the past four years, and with single adult males accounting for more than two in every five household types owed the relief duty.

When submitting and progressing through a homelessness application, household support needs are identified. The proportion of households with support needs owed either the prevention or relief duties has generally been increasing over the past four years.

The most prevalent support need for applicants in Thurrock has consistently been where there has been a history of mental health



problems within the household, followed by those with physical ill health and disability and those at risk of or have experienced domestic abuse.

In general, where homelessness can be prevented or relieved, the most prevalent type of accommodation offered is in the private rental sector, and this has been the case for a number of years.

Action the local authority can take to prevent or relieve homelessness include helping households to secure accommodation found by the applicants (with and without financial payment), directly securing accommodation through the housing options services, negotiation, advocacy and mediation, and other financial payments, such as those to reduce arrears.

If accommodation cannot be sustained through the prevention duty or assistance to secure accommodation is not successful during through the relief duty, a further assessment is undertaken to understand if the household is owed the main housing duty. The main housing duty owed by a local authority to someone who is homeless, eligible, has a priority need and is not intentionally homeless.

A number of factors are considered to determine whether a homeless household has a priority need for housing. Some groups of people, such as pregnant women, households with dependent children and victims of domestic abuse must be accepted as in priority need.

Others, such as those with physical disabilities or mental health illnesses and disabilities may also be in priority need if they would be significantly more vulnerable than an ordinary person would be if they became homeless.

Although the proportion of households with dependent children within all those owed a main duty has seen a slight year-on-year reduction, it remains the most significant priority need in homeless households Thurrock. There has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of

households identified in priority need of housing as a result of mental health problems, with physical disability and ill health remaining a consistent factor for priority need.

Unlike accommodation secured through the prevention and relief duties, most of the accommodation offered to households owed the main housing duty was social housing, however the use of private rental sector properties has been increasing in recent years.

What will we do?

We will effectively eliminate rough sleeping in Thurrock by providing appropriate and timely support, making an offer of accommodation to every verified rough sleeper, and sharing knowledge between partners to help identify those individuals

We will support residents experiencing hardship across all tenures in order to prevent homelessness and sustain their homes by adopting an approach across the wider system where concerns and early indicators are referred to the housing service for action

We will work in partnership across the system in order to improve access to health, care and support services for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness. We will bring together community and voluntary sector organisations, health partners and other support services in a physical location to directly support those who are at risk of or who are experiencing homelessness. We will co-design bespoke solutions with residents to address all the factors that may be contributing to their homelessness or risk of homelessness, such as addiction, mental health and debt

We will ensure that any households requiring temporary accommodation remain within the borough wherever possible and for as little time as possible through increasing the number of council-owned properties for use as temporary accommodation in the borough, and only looking to make out-of-borough placements where it is for safety reasons or in the best interests of the household





Deliver sustainable estate regeneration

Estate regeneration provides the opportunity to enhance estates, address issues of health inequalities and deprivation whilst increasing the provision of housing on site. The council has identified key areas requiring significant investment that would benefit from wider regeneration to deliver new and better-quality housing.

Council investments in existing housing stock need to be continually reviewed to ensure that programmes achieve the best outcomes for residents and maximise the overall value of assets. Investments also need to be made to ensure that homes and neighbourhoods support the health and wellbeing of residents in the local area.

Much of the council's existing housing stock is considered maintainable in the long-term; however, the council recognises that some property archetypes present challenges in ongoing maintenance and the living environment.

It may be that an alternative use could be more appropriate, including using the land or assets to build additional homes of the type and quality needed and in areas where people want to live.

Several potential locations have already been identified to be taken forward for housing redevelopment and regeneration, such as the Blackshots high-rise tower blocks, blocks of flats at Teviot Avenue, and part of the Civic Offices site in Grays.

The high-rise blocks at Blackshots experience problems with damp and mould. There are interim plans to address some immediate issues at the Blackshots blocks; however, these will not address the overall design and layout of these properties which does not meet the needs of modern living.

Teviot Avenue, Aveley, contains 36 flats constructed of pre-cast reinforced concrete of the 'Cornish' type.

A survey was undertaken to assess the condition of the structures which identified several issues with the flats. A stock options appraisal was completed and initial engagement with residents demonstrated the preferred option is to redevelop the site and provide more homes.

The position on redeveloping Civic Offices 1 (CO1) for residential accommodation and the benefits of providing a new council facility in the Civic Office extension were agreed at Cabinet in September 2019. A scheme based on 100% council-owned social housing offers a financially sustainable model for developing the site.

It is anticipated that further regeneration possibilities will arise throughout the lifetime of this strategy.

What will we do?
We will establish and embed a clear vision and deliver against ambitious plans in order to direct future housing development and regeneration
We will deliver the major regeneration projects at Blackshots, CO1 and Teviot Avenue to provide modern, sustainable homes that are fit for the future
We will embed resident engagement in estate regeneration in order to deliver projects that meet local needs, working closely with our residents to understand their priorities, identify required estate improvements, and progress opportunities for new housing to transform and enhance neighbourhoods
We will target the regeneration approach in order to maximise the value of housing assets
We will embed active travel in new developments in order to encourage sustainable transport and improve wellbeing





Review the model of Sheltered Housing provision

Housing providers throughout the country have recognised that the traditional approach to Sheltered Housing model may no longer be fit for purpose or match the lifestyles and aspirations of older people today. Sheltered housing stock and complexes can also appear dated.

The consequences of these factors combined leads to lower levels of demand, increased numbers of vacant properties, loss of rental income for housing providers as well as missed council tax revenue.

This challenge has been known and growing for some time nationally, with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation publishing housing research in December 1995 regarding the causes and consequences of difficulties letting sheltered housing properties.

Since 2020/21 there has been a significant increase in the average number of bidding cycles required for a successful offer of a sheltered housing property to be made to an applicant. Sometimes properties need to be readvertised if the shortlisted candidates refuse the property or withdraw from the allocation process, however sometimes the readvertisement is due to a lack of interest from applicants in that bidding cycle.

The increase in number of void days for 2020/21 cannot be explained by the choice-based lettings suspension entirely. Analysis suggests that the extended void periods were more likely a result of the lack of interest from an appropriate housing register applicant.

To better understand the drivers for increased void turnaround times and increased numbers of bidding cycles, lettings data can be broken down into property types. The successful letting of a first floor flat takes almost four times as many bidding cycles than needed for a ground

floor flat and void periods are on average 64.5% longer. Second floor flats, whilst requiring fewer bidding cycles than first floor flats, experience the longest void periods.

The relative difficulty in letting properties above the ground floor in sheltered housing may reflect concerns or preferences regarding accessibility of such properties for residents that meet the criteria for sheltered housing in Thurrock.

What will we do?

We will implement a new delivery model for Sheltered Housing in order to ensure this type of supported provision meets resident needs

We will investigate options for the potential decommissioning of Sheltered Housing complexes which are underused or no longer fit for purpose and offer opportunities to redevelop into new housing that meet current and future needs in Thurrock

We will overhaul the approach to allocating Sheltered Housing properties, reassess the eligibility criteria within the Allocations Policy and introduce a new approach to 'sensitive lettings' to improve access to this form of supported accommodation

We will invest in Sheltered Housing complexes in order to improve the day-to-day experience of residents by investing to improve conditions through internal and external decorating programmes, and by developing new ways and opportunities for residents to engage and collaborate with the housing team, other council services and external partners by increasing the use of technology in complexes





Protect Resident Safety

This chapter is focused on protecting people and working to prevent them from experiencing harm to their physical and mental health. It considers the physical environment relating to property conditions, fuel poverty, property accessibility and adaptations, and harm experienced from anti-social behaviour, crime, and domestic abuse. It also addresses and the general perception or feeling of safety in and around the home and neighbourhood.

The safety and security of residents in Thurrock are of paramount importance. They can be considered in two ways – the actions taken or required to protect physical safety and the actions taken or required to support people to feel safe. Although these are often aligned, it cannot be guaranteed that ensuring physical safety will result in a person feeling safe, and vice versa.

Improve warmth, safety, and standards in private sector homes

A significant amount of feedback was provided by residents during the development of this strategy relating to standards in the private sector. Responses suggested that action was required to ensure that all HMOs and other privately rented properties in Thurrock operate appropriately and safely, and to support vulnerable homeowners to live in warm and safe homes.

Private sector conditions

In 2021 the council commissioned a study to gather intelligence on the private housing stock in the borough. Through this, the council gained insight on the tenures, property conditions, likely instances of fuel poverty and geographical distribution of properties.

In recent years, Thurrock has seen growth in the number of properties used in the private rental sector, both as dwellings let in their entirety and as houses of multiple occupation (HMOs). The 2021 study estimated that the size of the private rental sector in Thurrock had increased by 76.3% compared to the findings of the 2011 census.

The council uses a risk-based evaluation tool called the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to help identify potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified

in dwellings. The HHSRS is used to determine whether residential premises are safe to live in, or whether a hazard exists that may cause harm to the health and safety of a potential occupant.

The system assesses 29 types of housing hazard and provides a rating for each one. Those which score highly on the scale are called category 1 hazards and the council has a duty to take the appropriate enforcement action. Those that fall lower down the scale and pose a lesser risk are called category 2 hazards.

The data provided in the private sector stock condition survey estimated that 11% of properties in the private sector are estimated to have at least one category 1 hazard.

The private sector stock condition survey estimated that highest concentration of all HHSRS hazards is found in the wards of Grays Thurrock, Little Thurrock Rectory, and East Tilbury, with the highest concentration of properties experiencing excess cold located in East Tilbury, Orsett and Grays Thurrock.

The wards of Tilbury St Chads, Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park, and Belhus featured the highest concentrations of households of fuel poverty in Thurrock.



Fuel poverty is driven by three main factors: low household incomes, high energy costs, and poor property energy efficiency such as insufficient insulation or ineffective heating systems.

Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

HMOs can present greater risks to the health, safety, and wellbeing of residents than comparable single occupancy homes. Risks such as dangerous gas appliances, faulty electrical systems and inadequate means of escape and other fire precautions are examples of some of the hazards that the private housing team investigate in Thurrock on a regular basis.

We estimate that there are 2501 HMOs in Thurrock. Grays Riverside ward has the highest number of HMOs, followed by West Thurrock & South Stifford, and Grays Thurrock.

Through the stock condition survey, we estimate that at least one category 1 hazard is present in 26% of HMOs in Grays Thurrock, 23% of HMOs in The Homesteads and 22% of HMOs in Little Thurrock Reactory. 12% of HMOs in Grays Thurrock are also estimated to be in disrepair.

The purpose of licensing, especially for HMOs, is to ensure that residential accommodation within the private rented sector is safe, well managed and of good quality with a particular focus on safety.

A licence is needed for all properties that are occupied by five or more people, living together as two or more households, with additional licensing rules for HMOs in certain areas in Thurrock until May 2024.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Mandatory disabled facilities grants (DFGs) are available from local authorities to fund or part-fund the completion of a range of adaptations for disabled occupants. DFGs are issued for works that

are necessary and appropriate for the property to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and that are reasonable and practicable to carry out.

In addition, DFGs must be approved for works to make the dwelling safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with them. The most prevalent harms removed in Thurrock properties between April 2019 and March 2021 as a result of disabled facilities grants were relating to personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage, falls with baths, and falls on stairs.

What will we do?
We will drive up the standards and quality of homes in the private sector in order to ensure greater availability of safe and suitable homes for Thurrock residents by developing targeted, data-driven interventions and working with private sector landlords to improve housing standards and living conditions and support vulnerable owner-occupiers to remove HHSRS hazards from their homes
We will tackle hazards in the private rental sector in order to improve resident safety by using the full extent of enforcement powers available to the council
We will encourage private sector residents to access available support in order to live independently in their homes for longer through Disabled Facilities Grant usage where appropriate as a method to removing hazards and improve the health and wellbeing of households in Thurrock
We will develop a strategic approach to reduce fuel poverty in Thurrock in order to address the harm this causes to residents, supporting improvements to the EPC ratings of private homes across the borough by designing and delivering initiatives targeted at poor energy efficiency and using technology, data, and predictive analytics to identify and proactively support households at greatest risk of experiencing fuel poverty





Invest in and maintain quality council-owned homes that are fit for the future

The council's aims for its homes and estates are that they should be places where residents enjoy living and working, where they take pride in their homes and can enjoy being part of a thriving community. The aspiration is to invest in and maintain high-quality accommodation that demonstrates the benefits of the council's repairs and capital investment programmes and positively influences the health and wellbeing of our tenants and residents.

The council owns and manages just under 10,000 homes and its stock includes over 1,000 sheltered housing properties across the borough. Half of the council's general needs properties are three-bedroom homes, and the remaining majority comprise one and two-bedroom flats.

A 2017 stock condition survey demonstrated that the stock was in a fair to good condition with specific themes emerging such a need to prioritise work to property exteriors.

The council provides an effective and responsive day-to-day repairs and maintenance services that keep properties in good repair. The repairs service is delivered through third party contracts, providing a responsive repairs service to all housing tenants in line with government and locally set standards and timeframes.

Building and fire safety are matters of significant importance for any party or organisation involved in the management or maintenance of residential properties, and the responsibilities must not be taken lightly.

To meet its responsibilities, the council has a compliance regime to provide complete assurance to residents that their homes are well managed and meet required safety standards. Specific fire safety policies are in place to set how the housing service will manage and maintain its assets following the regulatory framework.

The housing service has begun to proactively develop an action plan to ensure that the council is in a strong position to meet and address the Social Housing White Paper proposals.

The housing service also stands ready to ensure compliance with the emerging Building Safety Bill, the implementation of recommendations made within the '*Building a Safer Future*' report following the Grenfell Tower fire, and any new duties or responsibilities introduced by the Fire Safety Act 2021. This aligns with the Charter for Social Housing Residents, as set out in the Social Housing White Paper.

Resident engagement is also crucial from the perspective of building management and safety. As part of the '*Building a safer future*' report published following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the introduction of a 'golden thread' was made. This golden thread aims to serve as a tool to manage buildings as holistic systems, allowing people to use information to design, construct and operate their buildings safely and effectively.

Damp and mould

Damp and mould in social housing is an issue across the UK. It is widely recognised as one of the most challenging aspects for landlords and residents to prevent and manage. It is for this reason that the Housing Ombudsman undertook a thematic review and recently published a report on this subject, entitled '*Spotlight on damp and mould – It's not lifestyle*'.

Analysis of council repairs data between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2021 shows that damp and mould repairs are relatively uncommon as a proportion of all repairs. During this time, 2242 responsive damp and mould repairs were completed, representing 4.1% of the total repair demand.

During the reporting period, 2197 damp and mould related works orders were completed at 1,123 council-owned properties, reflecting 11.4% of the council's housing stock.

Further analysis of repairs data demonstrates that tenants of most of these properties only reported damp and mould once during the two-year period, with only 2% of those living in council's housing stock reporting damp and mould concerns more than once during this same period.

There are over five times as many damp and mould works orders completed in January compared to August and damp and mould issues are clearly positively associated with older stock which is less likely to be thermally well insulated. Findings suggest that the primary cause of damp is condensation, where warm humid air inside the property condenses on cold walls, more commonly occurring in older properties, during the winter months.

The 'Spotlight on damp and mould – It's not lifestyle' report produced 26 recommendations for landlords, including an ask of landlords to shift their approach to damp and mould.

Decarbonisation

In October 2019, the council passed a motion to declare a climate emergency and to take urgent action to reduce its carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030. The council has committed to reducing its carbon footprint to zero. The council's initial plans to respond to the climate crisis is by making sure the council's operations are carbon neutral by 2030.

The council is committed to continually investing to improve the overall thermal efficiency of homes, whilst effectively supporting the borough's most vulnerable residents out of fuel poverty.

What will we do?

We will listen to the views of residents and understand their priorities in order to design, develop and deliver stock improvement programmes that target the things that matter

We will invest in and embed new technology in order to effectively direct housing investment for maintenance and improvement

We will embed proactivity in the approach to maintaining council-owned homes in order to achieve a good standard and mitigate the need for reactive repairs by analysing detailed stock condition survey data to identify properties requiring investment over the next five to ten years. This information will inform plans for planned and cyclical maintenance programmes to ensure properties are safe and comply with legislative requirements

We will proactively share information relating to building and fire safety in order to support residents to feel safe in their homes

We will develop a holistic approach to damp and mould in council-owned properties in order to significantly reduce occurrences by delivering against an action plan based upon the *Spotlight on damp and mould* report and embedding technology, modelling and predictive analytics to identify properties likely to be experiencing such issues

We will support residents out of fuel poverty in order to improve health and wellbeing and quality of life by achieving EPC band C ratings across all housing stock by 2030 through direct investment in council homes from the housing revenue account and maximising the use of available funding streams

We will increase the use of sustainable and renewable technology in our stock in order to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and support the council's green agenda





Strengthen community safety and prevent anti-social behaviour

The council holds considerable responsibilities to protect its residents from crime and anti-social behaviour by providing strategy, policy, and frontline enforcement services.

Crime is a broad and complex issue, impacting upon the health and wellbeing of victims and survivors, and wider society.

Anti-social behaviour is any act that causes – or is likely to cause – harassment, alarm, or distress. It is also any act that can cause nuisance or annoyance related either to housing or the affected person's occupation of their home.

The quality of the local environment is impacted in part by anti-social behaviour in Thurrock. Examples include littering, nuisance vehicles, and drug dealing and use. These impact on perceptions among the community of safety and their ability to enjoy their local area.

The *Charter for Social Housing Residents* sets out that every social housing resident should have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in. In relation to anti-social behaviour, it outlines that social housing tenants have a right to feel safe in their homes, without the stress, fear, and tensions that anti-social behaviour and crime can cause and encourages landlords to develop practical solutions to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

The topic of anti-social behaviour featured heavily as a priority throughout the engagement for the development of this strategy, with concerns raised regarding the perception of feeling unsafe.

Certain groups are more likely to be the victims of crime, including women and girls, children and young people, the elderly and those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership brings together local organisations with the shared goals of reducing crime and the fear of crime, anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drug misuse and reducing re-offending.

What will we do?

We will work in partnership to reduce local levels of crime and opportunities for crime to take place in order to make Thurrock a safer place to live, forming part of a new *Community Safety Service* for Thurrock and working across housing to support the priorities identified by Thurrock Community Safety Partnership annually

We will develop a multi-agency data monitoring tool to ensure all reports of anti-social behaviour to all community safety agencies, can be identified, enabling the identification of trends and analysis of data on repeat victims and perpetrators, including hate incidents and crimes to better inform to joint approach to tackling such issues

We will improve the local response to supporting victims/survivors of crimes to improve their health and wellbeing by fully adopting a person-centred and strength-based approach to such individuals

We will adopt new technology in order to better to record and monitor antisocial behaviour incidents and outcomes

We will communicate effectively about action taken to tackle anti-social behaviour in order to reassure residents by using direct, effective, and rapid responses to reports of anti-social behaviour and encouraging others to make reports of anti-social behaviour concerns as a result of evidence of positive outcomes

We will embed safety principles such as 'secure-by-design' and natural surveillance in new developments in order to reduce the likelihood of crime or anti-social behaviour in the future





Tackle domestic and sexual abuse and violence

Domestic abuse and sexual abuse are still largely hidden crimes and measuring the true scale of the issue is complex. Domestic abuse and sexual abuse happen in all communities.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was passed into law in April 2021. The Act provided a new statutory definition of domestic abuse, introduced new laws and changes to existing laws, and placed new duties on local authorities, the Government, and other public bodies, such:

- The provision of safe accommodation for all survivors of domestic abuse
- Ensuring that fleeing abuse does not result in the loss of right to lifetime or assured tenancies when these were in place
- Ensuring that homeless people identified as survivors of domestic abuse are given priority

Domestic abuse and sexual abuse disproportionately affect women. Often the abuse is perpetrated by men, and is more likely to happen to women who have a disability.

Information collected by Thurrock Refuge between April 2018 and March 2021 indicates that 295 victims of domestic abuse were provided with safe accommodation – 120 refuge clients with 175 children. The average age of domestic abuse victims in safe accommodation was 35, however the ages ranged from 21 to 71.

72% of those provided accommodation had children, and 7% were pregnant. 88% of Thurrock Refuge clients were British nationals, however 5% of clients had no recourse to public funds.

There is a strong association within some data sets and the deprivation levels across wards in Thurrock. On average, 52% of

residents in safe accommodation in Thurrock were unemployed while approximately 42% of residents' employment status was unrecorded in the same time frame, based on a three-year cohort.

The unemployment rate is high which could be for a range of reasons, such as mental health needs, or given that 5% of residents required an interpreter and 9% of residents' first language was not English these may also be potential barriers in accessing and navigating employment or being financially able to continue to alternative accommodation.

Individuals identifying themselves as having a disability was an emerging trend in the data. Although numerically small, there is limited understanding of these needs and therefore requires greater focus. Mental health support emerged as the largest need for residents, corroborated by the understanding that emotional or psychological and jealous or controlling behaviour abuse types affected over half of residents each year.

The Domestic Abuse Act has defined children as victims in their own right. The specific needs of children residing in refuge is not known and will be a focus for future assessments.

What will we do?

We will offer support to survivors of domestic and sexual abuse effectively, professionally, and appropriately by introducing measures to ensure that residents receive a dedicated approach that considers the circumstances of each individual

We will work to improve pathways into safe accommodation in order to best support those fleeing abuse





Support vulnerable adults and children into housing

There is an urgent need to reform the accommodation and care pathway for vulnerable residents in Thurrock, such as those with mental illness, and those leaving care.

The role that housing plays in mental health support for individuals is crucial. Therefore, providing the right type of housing is fundamental to the help individuals to recover and live well in their community, as well as reducing demand on statutory services.

Accommodation and care for individuals with the highest levels of need coupled with challenging behaviour has been identified as the most difficult to source and sustain in Thurrock.

The accommodation and care provision for individuals in Thurrock with mental illness consists of residential care, supported living and floating support. Anecdotal evidence across housing, health and social care indicates that there is a gap in provision people with needs that are too complex and challenging for supported living and are inappropriate for residential care, and for whom the gap between general needs housing and supported living is too great.

The current model does not accommodate the fluctuating needs of people with mental illness. Unlike other groups, mental illness is not a linear condition and without the right support and boundaries may result in instances of frequent admissions and placement breakdowns. An individual may require one or all levels a model of accommodation and care provision, at different times, for short or long periods of time. The majority will require a multi-agency approach to their support in the community; however, when this support is delivered directly by each responsible agency can add to the feeling of overwhelm and chaos for the individual.

Locally, there are instances of multiple high-cost placements that do not deliver the quality and outcomes aspired to. A lack of concerted focus on achieving what is important to the individual and little opportunity to review plans and adapt, mostly occurring at times of crisis, has led to a drive to transform supported living.

Local authorities have a duty, as a corporate parent, to ensure continued involvement in supporting young people as they leave care and move into independence until they are 25 years of age. This approach should mean that bureaucratic processes are overridden, and decisions are made with the child's needs in mind.

Young people in care and leaving care can be highly vulnerable and at risk of experiencing multiple accommodation moves. They can often struggle to cope with the challenges of living independently at a young age without a family network, and they may need help to access services or deal with specific problems they face.

Good practice guidance published by the Government in 2020 recommends that council housing departments and children's services should produce a joint protocol that sets out how they will work together.

What will we do?

We will improve the supported and specialist housing offer in Thurrock in order to address shortfalls for vulnerable residents

We will align housing staff with Integrated Locality Networks in order to implement an integrated approach to care and support planning

We will continue to support the Head Start Housing initiative in order to provide suitable accommodation for care leavers as a foundation for their future





Improve estate standards

As a landlord, the council is responsible for managing and maintaining large areas of communal space, both indoors and out.

The *Charter for Social Housing Residents* seeks to ensure that all social housing residents can enjoy good homes and neighbourhoods.

In the white paper the Government announced a Decent Homes Standard review that would also consider how improvements to communal space around social homes could make places more liveable, safe, and comfortable.

Around 3,500 council-owned properties are located on estates or in areas with outside communal space that the housing service is responsible for maintaining.

Feedback from Thurrock residents during the development of this strategy included concerns about feeling safe in and around the borough's neighbourhoods, in particular relating to anti-social behaviour, drug crime and misuse, road and footpath safety, and inadequate street lighting.

Residents expressed improvements to specific estates and neighbourhoods should be made following engagement with those who live in those areas, ensuring that local needs, priorities and concerns are fully considered.

Through recent satisfaction survey activity, the responses of tenants who gave satisfaction ratings of 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' were analysed. 40.9% of the dissatisfied responses related to the quality of work carried out, specifically relating to standards of cleaning and litter either not being picked up or left behind. 34.1% was due to the frequency of the caretaking, with perceptions that extending periods of time pass without any work being carried out.

Similar analysis was undertaken regarding drivers of dissatisfaction relating to grounds maintenance in and around the council's housing stock. Over half of the responses (54.5%) related to the frequency of grass cutting and cleaning of the area. A quarter of responses referred to the general quality of work with the majority of these mentioning cutting and trimming of grass and bushes, and 13.5% of tenants said that waste was left behind and the area was left untidy.

What will we do?

We will implement a new approach to estate inspections in order to protect resident safety in estates and communal areas by delivering and embedding a new estate inspections quality and safety framework, supported by a more frequent inspection regime to assess and remove health and safety risks

We will adopt a collaborative approach to improve safety on estates in order to address the issues that matter to local residents. We will establish a programme of resident and ward councillor estate walkabouts to improve the connection to and understanding of the local area. We will use this information across housing, with our community partners and with residents to make our estates clean, attractive spaces where residents feel safe, using lighting, CCTV, and environmental improvements to do this

We will invest in and embed technology in order to facilitate robust management of estate standards

We will implement new approaches in order to tackle issues of nuisance parking on estates and improve the appearance of local areas, such as replacing high-cost wooden knee rails and bollards with green infrastructure such as hedging and shrub plants in order to deter such behaviour and improve the quality of environment





Strengthen Community Engagement and Empowerment

The COVID-19 pandemic led people to experience significant periods of social isolation and separation from their friends, family, and wider support networks. It also saw communities come together, with people supporting one another through immensely challenging and testing circumstances. The collective strength and resilience showed within communities

This chapter considers how relationships are built and strengthened between residents, the areas in which they live, the communities of which they are a part, and the organisations and groups that provide support and the council.

A significant ambition of this strategy is to support communities to build resilience and to broaden engagement with them. This strategy seeks to use the wider system and its networks to take an integrated approach in supporting communities, giving residents active and meaningful roles in matters that affect them in the context of housing and their estates and neighbourhoods.

Improve resident satisfaction and access to information

The Charter for Social Housing Residents seeks to ensure that landlords remain transparent and accountable to their tenants at all times. The white paper sets out that every social housing resident should be able to expect to know how their landlord is performing.

As a mechanism to achieve this, the Regulator of Social Housing is seeking to introduce a suite of tenant satisfaction measures for all registered providers of social housing, including local authorities.

In addition to greater transparency, these measures aim to inform the regulator about landlord compliance with the consumer standards under a more proactive consumer regulation regime as proposed in the social housing white paper.

There has been a generally positive trend in resident satisfaction levels recent years, however levels of resident satisfaction with housing services were lower in 2021/22.

In 2020/21, the last full reporting year, a total of 1983 ratings were provided by residents. Of these, 1497 reported that they were fairly or very satisfied with the overall service provided by housing. 234 residents provided neutral responses, and 252 shared that they were fairly or very dissatisfied.

Whilst satisfaction was reported as being very high in some areas such as rent value for money and the perception that homes are safe and secure, the perception of the repairs service fell below the target set for the reporting year.

Analysis and categorisation of recent resident feedback indicates that presently, the repairs and maintenance service is the main factor for dissatisfaction with over half of all comments (56.1%) relating to it.

Within the repairs and maintenance category for dissatisfaction, outstanding repairs represented 28.3% of the feedback received.



Sheltered Housing tenants with a tenancy length of between 10 to 15 years, 15 to 20 years and under a year were 100% satisfied with the repairs service and the least satisfied have been a tenant between one and five years (70%).

Tenants within general needs properties that have lived in their property for 10 to 15 years were most satisfied (76.2%), and those who had held their tenancies for between 15 and 20 years are the least satisfied (53%).

Further to these key measures, tenants are also asked to either indicate whether they agree or disagree with measures relating to landlord characteristics.

General feedback provided indicates that tenants find housing staff to be friendly and approachable, working to keep tenants informed and treating them fairly. Some concerns were raised by tenants regarding the ease of interaction with the housing service and how effective and efficient that service is.

However, the greatest proportions of dissatisfaction relate to tenant perception regarding the housing service listening to their views and understanding their needs.

Analysis of key terms used by tenants expressing their dissatisfaction when asked for their perception on whether they felt the housing service listened to their views is helpful as an indicator of similar themes from different residents.

Listen, nothing and *done* all feature prominently in the word cloud visualisation. Analysis of underlying tenant responses show that these are related – among dissatisfied tenants there is the perception and experience that they do not see action taken when feedback is asked for or given about the things that matter to them.

What will we do?

We will implement digital solutions in order to improve resident access to information and housing services

We will demonstrate our commitment to listen to residents in order to better understanding their needs and priorities by exploring the reasons for dissatisfaction, delivering focus groups with tenants and closing the contact loop with tenants by responding to the issues they raise, progress any actions required as a result and providing evidence of the outcome

We will tackle the drivers of dissatisfaction in order to make positive changes and improvements to the things that matter most to residents by using continuous learning and acting upon the feedback we are given from tenants

We will utilise technology and data analytics in order to better understand drivers of resident satisfaction and dissatisfaction

We will proactively prepare to report against new national tenant satisfaction measures in order to make our performance as a landlord more visible to our tenants by implementing a robust approach to recording, monitoring and reporting against the new tenant satisfaction measures that will be published by the Regulator of Social Housing by April 2023





Strengthen, integrate, and diversify community and resident engagement

The *Charter for Social Housing Residents* sets an expectation for residents to have their voice heard by their landlord. Within the social housing white paper, the Government sets out that it will:

- expect the Regulator of Social Housing to require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can continually improve the way they engage with social housing tenants
- deliver a new opportunities and empowerment programme for social housing residents, to support more effective engagement between landlords and residents, and to give residents tools to influence and hold landlords to account
- review professional training and development to ensure residents receive a high standard of customer service.

The white paper also expects that the Regulator of Social Housing will require landlords to show how they have sought out and considered ways to improve tenant engagement.

Traditional forms of engagement, such as consultation and surveys, are not always effective and can even have an adverse impact upon wellbeing if people feel pressurised to take part.

During the development of this strategy, residents stressed the importance of diversifying and expanding the opportunities and methods used for engagement. Recent years have seen significant growth of digital communication technology in homes, such as video calling and meetings, and the decline in face-to-face interaction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Engagement can take many forms, but the crucial factor for the future is that it is tailored appropriately.

What will we do?

We will embed an approach for the co-design and improvement of services in order to meaningfully involve and empower residents and communities. Approaches will include formally and informally co-designing solutions and provisions, influencing and making decisions, raising issues, inputting in the tendering of new contract arrangements and addressing challenges relating to housing in Thurrock

We will implement community reference and investment boards, as set out in the *Case for Further Change*, which will explore options for pooled locality funds at neighbourhood level in order to strengthen community empowerment, and we will work with communities and the voluntary sector to deliver at a more local level, only centralising that which cannot be provided effectively in neighbourhoods and localities

We will embed professional standards in housing services in order to ensure high service standards and consistency by providing training opportunities for staff across the service that meet or exceed requirements for training standards as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing in line with emerging legislation and regulation

We will develop opportunities to educate about housing in order to develop skills for independent living by building stronger links and relationships with the schools and colleges within Thurrock and creating a platform to engage with children and young people





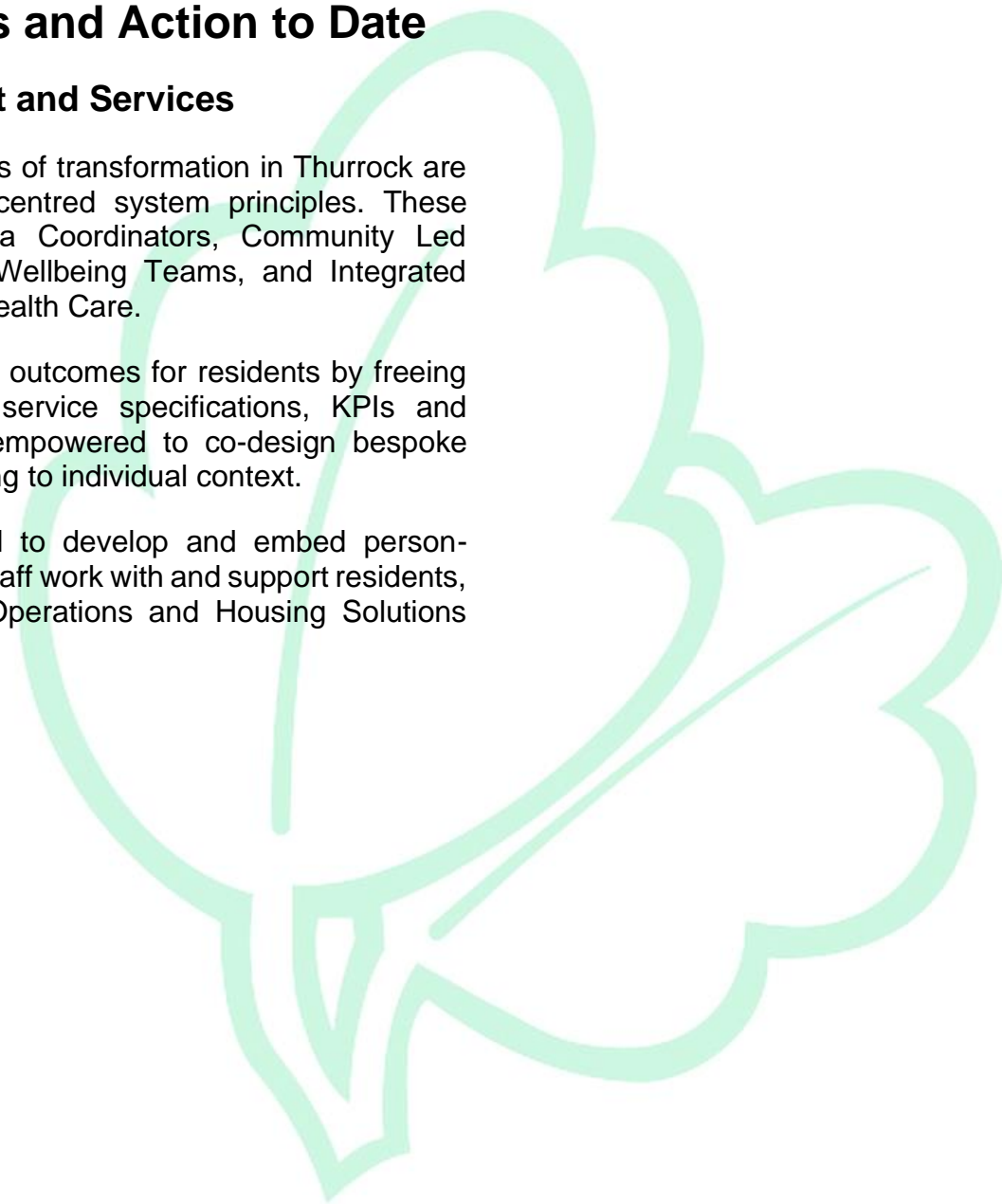
Recent Achievements and Action to Date

Delivering Housing Support and Services

Many of the most successful areas of transformation in Thurrock are already operating using person-centred system principles. These include the council's Local Area Coordinators, Community Led Solutions, Community Builders, Wellbeing Teams, and Integrated Primary and Community Mental Health Care.

These teams are delivering better outcomes for residents by freeing frontline staff from pre-defined service specifications, KPIs and bureaucracy. Instead, they are empowered to co-design bespoke solutions with residents, responding to individual context.

The housing service has started to develop and embed person-centred approaches into the way staff work with and support residents, including pilots in the Housing Operations and Housing Solutions service area.



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Meeting Housing Need

Identifying and providing the right homes for Thurrock based on household need

The development of a new SHMA is currently underway to update the understanding of local housing need, and is anticipated to identify the housing need for Thurrock until 2040 and will guide the development of the new Thurrock Local Plan.

The council does have a pipeline of new build schemes, informed by regular reviews of the council's Housing Register to provide an indicator of social and affordable housing demand, including any additional support needs or property adaptations that may be required.

This information has also been used to guide developments undertaken by other registered providers of social housing in Thurrock.

An affordability joint strategic needs assessment has progressed well in partnership with the council's Public Health team. The detailed findings and understanding provided by that assessment will be taken forward as actions of this strategy. They will feature alongside the development of a 'Thurrock Affordability' standard that considers local costs of living, local income, and housing market prices.

Over the past two years, 119 new council-owned homes have been built in the borough. In the 2020-21 financial year 29 new homes were provided at the Alma Court development in South Grays and a further 53 new homes constructed at Heathlyn Close and Claudian Way in Chadwell St Mary.

Further to this, in 2021-22 the council let 35 properties built to HAPPI standards at Beaconsfield Place in Tilbury and two further wheelchair accessible homes in an innovative scheme at Defoe Parade in Chadwell St Mary.

Planning approval has been secured for the provision of four new council homes at Loewen Road in Chadwell St Mary and for a multi-tenure project at Culver Centre and Field in South Ockendon, to be delivered through Thurrock Regeneration Limited.

There is also an existing pipeline of proposed projects, such as the redevelopment of part of the Civic Offices site for further council-owned homes. The current number of potential dwellings on new build projects under consideration is 504, featuring a mix of council-owned properties and other delivery approaches.

The council has also acquired over 120 existing properties from the local housing market for use within its housing stock, utilised as part of a wider plan to transform the council's temporary accommodation offer.

Addressing the housing affordability crisis in Thurrock

Every new build property and home acquired from the housing market have been offered at weekly rental levels within LHA rates applicable in Thurrock, making these properties the most affordable homes for rent in the borough, and is also the case across the approximately 9,900 homes in the council's housing stock, all of which are offered at social and affordable rent levels.

The council has committed that it will continue to deliver new homes through both estate regeneration and smaller scale development within affordable rent levels, continuing to ensure affordable housing is available to those most in need in Thurrock.



Preventing homelessness

Although the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 generally directed local housing authorities to place much greater focus on homelessness prevention through general service provision, Thurrock Council's housing service has taken significant action to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.

A number of roles have been created and exist in the service to target specific areas of challenge or priority regarding homelessness, with some funded in part or full from DLUHC grants.

The ongoing temporary accommodation transformation plan has delivered successful outcomes to date, reducing the number of households in emergency and temporary accommodation significantly below pre-pandemic levels.

There are a number of cross-service initiatives that aim to support households at risk of or experiencing homelessness. A pre-eviction panel has been established focussing on council tenants, featuring wide representation from across the council with a sole focus on the prevention of tenancy breakdown.

Briefings and training sessions have been delivered by housing solutions staff to colleagues in adults social care and children's services, with aims to deliver these sessions to other frontline and resident facing staff across the organisation.

Multi-disciplinary groups have been established to review case studies from the different perspectives of partners in the wider system, developing a shared understanding of existing challenges and aiming to identify areas of good practice and where improvement can be made to reach positive outcomes for households in the future.

Delivering sustainable estate regeneration

The most significant regeneration project in Thurrock currently underway is the investment in over 140 acres at Purfleet-on-Thames, delivering up to 2,850 new homes. Purfleet Centre Regeneration Limited is a joint venture between Urban Catalyst and Swan Housing, in partnership with Thurrock Council. The first phase of 61 homes is currently anticipated to be handed over in Spring 2023.

Specific projects have commenced to take forward regeneration opportunities for council-owned homes at Blackshots, Teviot Avenue and Civic Offices 1. Initial resident engagement activity has already been completed with households at Blackshots and Teviot Avenue, with very high proportions in favour of redevelopment.

Reviewing the model of Sheltered Housing provision

During the past two years, the Sheltered Housing team have continued to deliver a valuable service to all tenants which has been enhanced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several actions have been taken within the service to address underperformance in void turnaround, specifically regarding properties above the ground floor. A dedicated Sheltered Housing Officer has been assigned to this area to improve performance.

The Sheltered Housing Team is working with other services across the council to identify suitable applicants, making person-centred decisions relating to the age eligibility where a move to sheltered housing would have a beneficial impact on the health and wellbeing of a household.



Protecting Resident Safety

Improving warmth, safety, and standards in private sector homes

As a direct result of interventions by the Private Sector Housing team, 2642 category 1 and 2 hazards were removed from properties in Thurrock between 2018-19 and 2020-21.

An additional HMO licensing scheme was introduced in 2019 and has licensed over 230 HMOs to date. Work to explore a selective licensing scheme for the private rental sector has commenced.

The council was awarded £61k in grants from DLUHC to tackle criminal landlords and drive-up standards. Through proactive, targeted action, civil penalty fines have been used as a method of enforcement action, generating up to £220k for housing related offences.

The council launched Well Homes in 2014 to improve the housing conditions and the health and well-being of residents living in private properties. The Well Homes scheme offers help to make homes safer by reducing the risk of ill health or accidents and puts residents in touch with health and lifestyle services that can improve quality of life.

The council secured a Warm Homes Fund grant of £453k for first time central heating systems and was allocated £1.8m scheme that makes energy-saving improvements to the homes of people who struggle to pay heating bills and keep their homes warm in the winter.

Between 2017-18 and 2020-21, the council awarded over £1.9m of Disabled Facilities Grants to 310 applicants to fund essential adaptations to give disabled people better freedom of movement into and around their homes, and to facilities within the home.

Investing in and maintaining quality council-owned homes that are fit for the future

Since 2017 capital works totalling over £46m have been undertaken across the council's housing stock to address priorities areas. Between 2019/20 to 2020/21, 732 properties benefitted from external refurbishment and double-glazed window replacement, including street properties and 90 blocks of flats.

A new stock condition survey targeting 30% of the stock is being undertaken in the winter months of 2021/22 to gain an accurate picture of any properties suffering from seasonal damp or mould problems.

The council has also introduced a proactive approach to identifying properties experiencing damp and mould, with new questions in the general perception, repairs, gas repairs, gas servicing and new tenancy surveys undertaken on behalf of the council.

This new approach was introduced as a direct result of the council's engagement with the Housing Ombudsman study and report produced on the subject of damp and mould.

The council's resident liaison officers (RLOs) have been trained by the national fuel poverty charity NEA. They are able to advise residents on how best to manage the home environment and how to manage their resources and their heating systems. RLOs can help residents to claim grants and liaise with financial inclusion officers to ensure they are accessing all the financial support they are entitled to.

Between April 2019 and March 2021 £408,961 was invested in servicing of mechanical ventilation and heat recovery units, repairing and replacing rainwater goods and completing the repair works under the specific mould remediation and prevention programme. A total of 4820 properties have benefitted from these works.



In addition, the council invested £5,219,307 in improving overall building efficiency. These works included the replacement of central heating boilers in 1807 homes, the replacement of windows and/or doors in 331 homes and the roof and insulation for 87 homes.

In February 2022 it was announced that the council would receive £3.2m under the first wave of the social housing decarbonisation fund to deliver a new ground-source heat pump project to the three high-rise tower blocks in Chadwell St Mary, replacing older and less efficient storage radiators and hot water systems.

Strengthening community safety and preventing anti-social behaviour

A noise nuisance reporting app aimed at reducing duplication and allowing residents to report issues with greater ease has been introduced, offering an effective alternative to diaries and logs.

Across the council, work is underway to develop and implement a new Community Safety Operating Model to improve the council's delivery of its community safety partnership strategy.

In conjunction with this, a new Community Safety Service is being developed, bringing together the CCTV and Concierge teams from the housing service under a single structure with other related teams.

Proposals have also been made to develop a new integrated centre for crime and enforcement within a central location that will house an advanced CCTV, command and control capability, supported by police and new community safety officers.

Tackling domestic and sexual abuse and violence

The council has conducted a review of its policies and processes to achieve DAHA accreditation – the benchmark for how housing

providers should respond to domestic abuse – and developed a new Domestic Abuse policy.

To reflect the council's commitment to tackling domestic abuse, the policy introduces several measures to ensure that residents receive a dedicated approach, considering the circumstance of each individual and always upholding best practice.

Supporting vulnerable adults and children into housing

In March 2016, children's services and the housing service developed a strategic partnership to support Thurrock's young people to access suitable accommodation at affordable rates.

In December 2018, Head Start Housing was launched, aiming to provide suitable accommodation for Thurrock's care leavers and a safe space to live and learn before moving on to a private rental or social housing tenancy. It has a portfolio of properties ranging from one to five-bedrooms, with varying levels of floating support to 24/7 provision.

Care leavers are supported to access housing benefit and, when they are ready, education, employment or training using the home as a foundation.

The housing service made a commitment to provide spaces for 30 individuals to Head Start Housing by end of 2023, and 24 spaces had been identified by the end of 2021.

Considerable progress has been made in the past three years, and the Head Start Housing Strategy has been refreshed to shape and drive positive change over the next 5 years.

Thurrock Council has actively supported and participated in the Government's Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. A cross-organisational group was



established to ensure a coordinated approach and private landlords were engaged to supply appropriate properties for this project.

Landlords and new tenants were supported to ensure the smooth running of tenancies alongside ongoing resettlement support, such as arranging English lessons if required, setting up bank accounts, finding jobs and getting children into education.

The council has successfully worked to increase the amount of council-owned temporary accommodation in the borough and has taken significant steps to date which includes the purchase of Brook House, now operating as a ten-unit temporary accommodation hostel.

Thurrock Council continues to operate a Housing First programme, providing intensive support to people who are long term or recurrently homeless with high support needs. The project has so far successfully supported seven individuals who were homeless or threatened with homelessness and faced persistent barriers to accessing housing, some of which were caused by health conditions and addictions.

Improving estate standards

The council commissioned a review of caretaking and estate services, with the report and recommendations being received in November 2021.

An overall service improvement plan has been developed incorporating the recommendations and actions from the review that seeks to improve estate standards and service delivery across the council's homes and neighbourhoods.

A new vision for estate services has also been set. The council aims to provide proactive and flexible estate services, working together with communities to provide safe and clean neighbourhoods that meet residents' needs, delivering value for money and supporting health and wellbeing.

The proposals for new housing development schemes led by the council integrate the principles of "Secured by Design" to help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and improve resident feelings of safety.



Strengthening community engagement and empowerment

Increasing resident satisfaction and access to information

In June 2020 the housing service upgraded its Housing Online portal for tenants and housing register applicants. The system offers great potential for improving resident interaction with the council's housing services and the ability reports and concerns to be submitted directly, for example relating to issues of anti-social behaviour.

An improved Housing Options offer is also possible through the Housing Online portal which will reduce duplication for staff, offer a more joined-up experience for residents, and increase the quality of data and reporting which are available.

Between July 2020 and October 2020, a full postal tenant satisfaction survey was undertaken by the council's service provider, KWEST Research Ltd, which was sent to every tenant. The project used a multi-mode approach, comprising a postal census survey targeting all the Council's tenant households, accompanied by email invitations and an online version to broaden survey reach and accessibility.

The survey results provide confirmation that the homes and services provided by the Council are meeting the needs of most residents. This is demonstrated by high proportions of residents expressing satisfaction with many key service areas including rent value for money, quality of home, home is safe and secure, neighbourhoods as a place to live and the overall Housing service.

The housing service has successfully made use of technology to send specific and tailored text messages to its tenants for a range of reasons, such as to provide information and support for rent accounts, share information about resident engagement days and to alert tenants to issues that may be affecting their blocks, such as lift repairs and maintenance.

Strengthening, integrating, and diversifying community and resident engagement

The housing services have strengthened its approach to resident engagement activity recently, working to share more information with tenants about subjects that matter to them.

In 2021, the council published a *Collaborative Communities Framework* for Thurrock to share the strengths and assets-based approach for how the council and its services intends to work with communities.

Co-produced through the *Stronger Together* partnership over three years, it sets out how we will work and enable our communities to co-design and influence decisions, address their own challenges and realise their own ambitions.

The publication of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 and the *Case for Further Change* provide an opportunity and starting point to build on the foundation of the Collaborative Communities Framework, strengthening the relationship and engagement between housing services, residents and the wider community, voluntary and faith sector in Thurrock.





Monitoring and Review

The Housing Strategy must be kept under constant review. This is partly due to the increased likelihood that legislation will be introduced during the lifetime of the document, which may have a material effect on the aims, objectives and actions outlined in the Housing Strategy. In addition, as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on housing becomes more apparent in the months and years after the document's publication, new priorities or actions may emerge.

The monitoring and review of the Housing Strategy will be undertaken by a new Housing Strategy Deliver Board that will be established. This Board will be responsible for monitoring the progress of the action plan published alongside the strategy. The action plan will be kept as a live document and regularly updated to ensure progress and that key actions are delivered within defined timeframes. The Housing Strategy Delivery Board will absorb the Homelessness Partnership Board, forming a single body with responsibilities for the progress of key strategic documents relating to housing.

As outlined above, it is anticipated that new actions will be added to the action plan during the lifetime of the strategy. Additions may be a reaction to changes in external factors (such as legislation) or proactively if an opportunity arises. These additions will be managed appropriately and ensure that the key themes continue to be reflected throughout the action plan.

An annual update will be provided to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure appropriate oversight of the action plan.

Acknowledgements

This strategy has been developed in partnership with a range of individuals, groups and organisations.

We are very grateful for each and every contribution made by residents, colleagues and partners that fed into the development of this strategy.

We would like to acknowledge the support of the chairs of the borough's community forums, the members of the WELCOM Forum, Purfleet-on Thames Community Forum and Orchards Community Forum, and members of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Lower Thames Crossing Taskforce for their active engagement in this work.

We would also like to acknowledge the Housing Resident Engagement team for facilitating the in-person tenant engagement sessions in Tilbury, Ockendon, Purfleet and Grays.

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Housing Strategy

2022-2027

Thurrock Council

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Foreword

Everyone should have access to a safe, stable, secure and suitable home.

This Housing Strategy sets Thurrock Council's direction and ambitions for housing support and services for the next five years. Through this strategy, the council aims to provide a housing service that not only delivers on its targets but does so in the most human and empathetic way.

Crucially, this strategy delivers a new vision and key principles that truly place residents at the centre of all that we do. It aims to minimise bureaucracy, increase flexibility and focus more on what matters to residents.

Thurrock Council is on your side.

The council will work over the next five years and into the future to deliver housing support and services that are fit for purpose for families and individuals in the borough.

We are committed to effectively ending the need for any Thurrock resident to experience rough sleeping in our borough and will see to understand the true need for accommodation for Thurrock residents, delivering homes that people will be proud of accordingly.

We will prioritise and protect residents' safety in their homes and neighbourhoods, whether they live in a council-owned home or in the private sector, and we will work hard to ensure that all residents are empowered to have their voices heard through meaningful engagement.

I'm delighted with what our teams have managed to achieve over the past two years, despite the challenges faced.

119 new council-owned homes have been handed over and let, the number of families in out-of-borough temporary accommodation placements is at its lowest in over three years and ever-closer work between the housing service and other council departments means that more support and positive outcomes are being delivered for those who are most vulnerable in our communities.

The actions put forward in this strategy present an opportunity to go even further, with scope for major estate regeneration to provide more genuinely affordable council-owned homes, end out-of-borough placements entirely unless for safeguarding reasons or through choice, and deliver new integrated operating models in housing and with other partners to better focus on delivering the things that matter to residents in their different localities.

I look forward to seeing the successful delivery of the aims and objectives of this strategy as those within the council work closely with residents and partners across the public, private and third sectors.

Together, we can work to ensure that every Thurrock resident will have a home that meets their needs and aspirations, serving as a foundation to support their health and wellbeing and their springboard to achieve their vision of a 'good life'.

Cllr Luke Spillman
Cabinet Member for Housing



Chapter 1

Introduction

It is important that Thurrock Council has a document that shares the aims and ambitions of the organisation regarding housing in the borough.

The council adopted its previous Housing Strategy in 2015. It required renewal, considering changes in legislation and regulation, market trends, the impact of recent welfare reforms, and new opportunities for meeting the housing needs of Thurrock's residents. Unlike the previous strategy, it is necessary that this document also reflects the turbulence and uncertainty that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Housing Strategy addresses the range of tenures available in Thurrock - social housing, owner-occupiers, and the private rental sector. It is important to note that this strategy will consider housing need and services in the borough and the barriers residents may face with accessing safe and secure accommodation. The Housing Strategy does not analyse options or sites for housing provision.

Corporate Context

Vision and Priorities

The Housing Strategy is underpinned by Thurrock Council's vision and corporate priorities, adopted in January 2018. The council's vision is for Thurrock to be **an ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.**

Sitting alongside the vision are the three corporate priorities of People, Place and Prosperity.

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- high quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
- build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
- communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

The Housing Strategy must appropriately address and meet the challenges set within this priority. Resilient partnerships across sectors and empowered communities are integral to any Housing Strategy's meaningful development and success. They will ensure that services consistently meet and reflect those who use them.

Place – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future.

This means:

- roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
- clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
- fewer public buildings with better services

While the housing service has specific responsibility for maintaining and developing homes and neighbourhoods managed by the council, this document goes beyond council-owned stock to consider all tenure types. This strategy will improve understanding of households' strengths and needs across the borough, identifying the requirements for homes and infrastructure that will support current and future Thurrock residents.

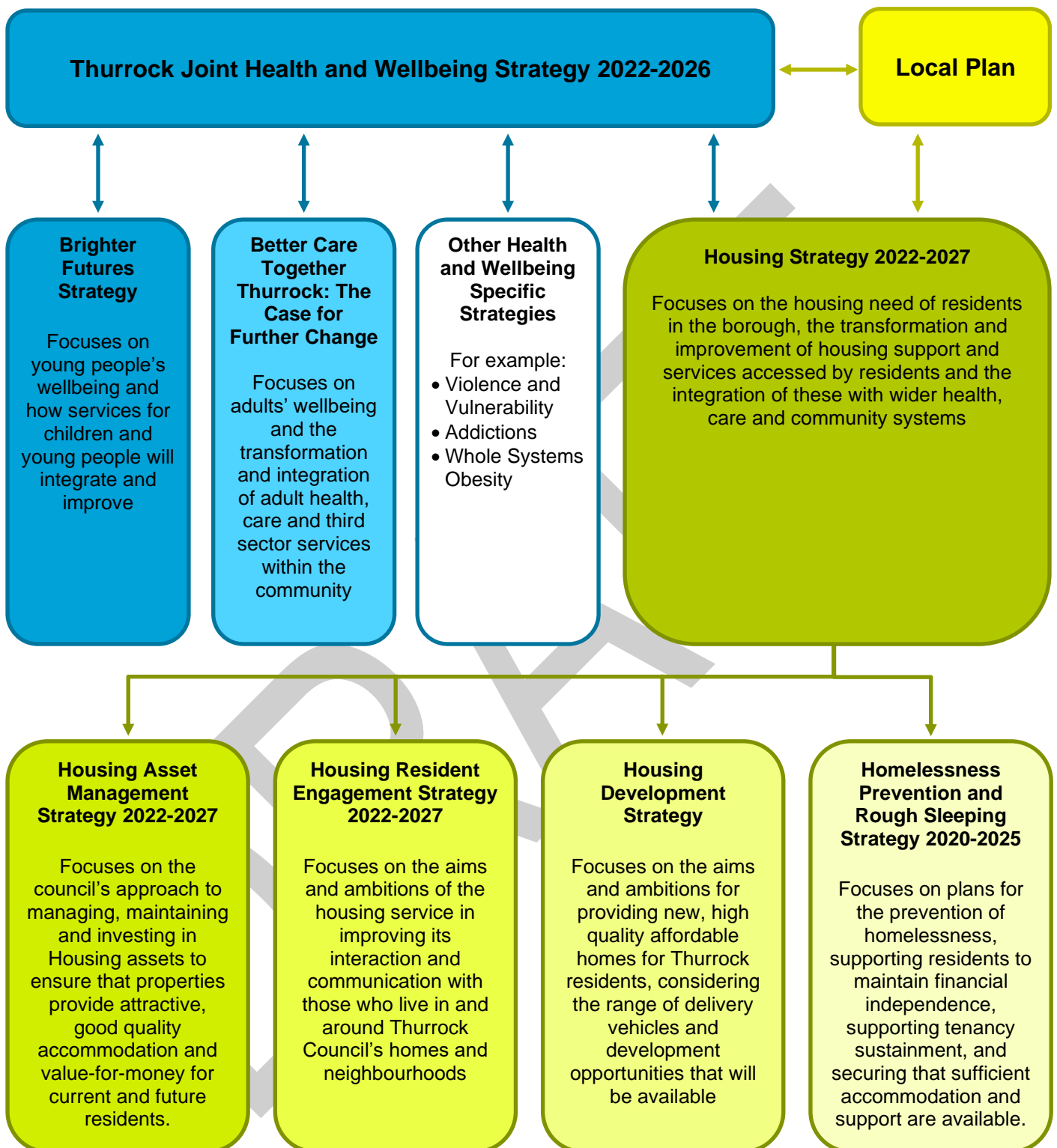
Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

This means:

- attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
- vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
- commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

The Housing Strategy aims to deliver opportunities for residents to achieve their aspirations, including accessing skills training with partner organisations. The strategy also seeks to expand relationships with other housing providers to increase affordable housing levels in the borough.

Strategic Context



Thurrock Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026

The Thurrock Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026 is the highest-level strategic document that describes our collective plans to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. The theme of the strategy is *Levelling the Playing Field*, and the strategy sets out high level actions to address health inequalities across the six domains of:

- Healthier for Longer including mental health
- Building Strong and Cohesive Communities
- Person Led Health and Care
- Opportunity For All
- Housing and the Environment
- Community Safety

The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy therefore addresses the wider determinants of health including education, employment, crime and community safety, and housing, as well as healthy lifestyles and health and care. It concentrates on the 'what' and the 'why' and points to additional more detailed and topic specific strategies that deal with delivery of individual objectives (the 'how').

As housing and the environment features as a domain of health inequality in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, there is a strong link with the aims and objectives of this Housing Strategy. Both documents will drive forward positive improvements for the health and wellbeing of Thurrock residents.

Thurrock Local Plan

The local plan sets a vision and framework for the future development of Thurrock, drawn up by the local planning authority with wider engagement and consultation with the community. Once in place, the local plan becomes part of the statutory development plan. The statutory development plan for the area is the starting point for determining local planning applications.

A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.

The local plan addresses many issues affecting local people. There are policies that cover spatial development issues in relation to education, health, community safety, energy management, sustainable development, climate change and flood management. It also contains policies on more traditional, but important, planning activity such as housing, employment, leisure and sport, natural and historic environment, and community facilities.

Where the Housing Strategy sets strategic aims and objectives regarding housing need, the local plan supports the practicalities of providing new homes, through the identification for sites and areas where development is permitted and the creation of planning policy that meets priorities in the borough. The housing strategy will feed into the development of the new local plan, ensuring alignment.

Better Care Together Thurrock: The Case for Further Change

The *Case for Further Change* strategy sets out a collective plan to transform, improve and integrate health, care and third sector services aimed at the borough's adults and older people to improve their wellbeing. It has been developed and agreed by the Thurrock Integrated Care Alliance (TICA) and its partner organisations. Partners across Thurrock have a long history of working together to agree and deliver shared outcomes.

The *Case for Further Change* proposes a transformation from the current system architecture and ways of working to move instead towards integrated locality teams. It intends to create a single Integrated Locality Network of professionals who will be able to collaborate more easily and effectively with each other, and with residents. The overall aim is to embed the maximum amount of care and support at locality and neighbourhood level within a multi-disciplinary network of staff who can collaborate to design integrated solutions with residents rather than make onward referrals.

Backing Thurrock: A five year strategy for economic recovery, resilience and a return to growth

The *Backing Thurrock Strategy* sets out actions that will help the council to strengthen and grow the economy through supporting major strategic projects such as the Thames Freeport, improving skills within the workforce, helping businesses to become more productive and competitive and delivering economic infrastructure. It a key element of the council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alongside the Local Plan, *Backing Thurrock* will form the strategic framework to drive the borough's return to growth and has been developed in collaboration with public, private, and voluntary sector organisations.

It aims to shape a strong economy where residents and businesses are helped to focus on their strengths and adapt to take advantage of new opportunities such as the Thames Freeport as growth resumes. Priorities include green growth, continued investment in broadband and helping the most vulnerable in the community tackle issues, develop their skills and find work.

South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2022

This document provides an assessment of housing need in Thurrock in partnership with neighbouring authorities. It identifies the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the duration of the Local Plan period. It allows the council to understand household and population projections and the requirements for distinct types of housing, including affordable housing and those that will meet the needs of diverse groups.

Healthy Housing for the Third Age: Improving Older People's Health through Housing - Annual Public Health Report 2018/2019

Housing is widely accepted to be a key determinant of health and can impact positively and negatively on an individual's physical and mental health, in turn affecting the demand for and use of health and social care resources. The annual public health report from 2018/2019 aimed to answer the following questions for the population aged 65+:

- What impact will demographic change have on the needs for new and existing housing stock across all tenures in the next 20 years?

- What types of housing do our elderly population want and what are the impacts of choosing to move to a home more suitable for later life?
- When considering a move to more suitable housing, what would make the option attractive to our elderly population?
- What impacts does housing have on health and how can we enhance the positives and mitigate against the negatives? And how can we ensure they are better understood by those affected, thereby enabling them to better care for themselves?

Youth Violence and Vulnerability: The Crime Paradox and a Public Health Response - Annual Public Health Report 2019/2020

The 2019/2020 annual public health report focused on the issue of serious youth violence and urban street gang activity, using the Public Health Approach methodology to identify and address the vulnerabilities of the young people concerned. It considered issues such as:

- Serious youth violence against the person including assault, serious assault, actual bodily harm, grievous bodily harm, stabbing/knife crime and gun crime and street robbery.
- Urban street gangs including gang related violent crime and drug related crime
- Local drugs markets
- County Lines
- Child criminal exploitation through gangs

Collaborative Communities Framework

Thurrock's *Collaborative Communities Framework* encapsulates our strengths and assets-based approach to how we work with communities. Co-produced via our *Stronger Together* partnership over three years, the framework sets out how we will work and enable our communities to co-design and influence decisions, address their own challenges and realise their own ambitions. It recognises the importance of the council (and partners) reducing the red-tape that often hinders community-led action, devolving power and enabling different ways of working so that communities alongside statutory partners and the third sector are better enabled to achieve locally determined outcomes and outcomes that make a significant impact on the individual's quality of life.

Opportunity for all: Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework

This framework sets out the council's commitment to helping to build pride, responsibility and respect with residents and employees, promoting equality and embracing the diversity of Thurrock's communities.

Chapter 2

Vision, Principles, Aims and Objectives

Housing Vision

Every Thurrock resident will have access to a safe, secure, suitable, and affordable home that meets their needs and aspirations, serving as a foundation to support their health and wellbeing.

Residents will be supported at home and in their local area through connected services, neighbourhoods, localities, and communities to achieve their vision of a 'good life'.

Housing and health are intrinsically linked. Access to a safe, secure, stable, warm, and affordable home will provide people with a solid foundation upon which they can better protect their health and support their wellbeing. If a home is lacking any of these factors, it will have a detrimental impact on the physical health, mental health, and general wellbeing of all those in the household.

A safe home can mean many things, such as being hazard free, or maintained in line with compliancy measures such as gas servicing and electrical testing. A safe home goes beyond physical maintenance and bricks and mortar; it can also relate to a resident's perception of safety in their home and in the neighbourhood or estate in which it is located.

A secure home can refer to the security of tenure, giving residents peace of mind and stability by having that solid foundation to build their vision of a good life, or it can again be considered in like with the perception of safety within the home from any outside harms.

The factors that determine a suitable home are wide ranging and tailored to the housing needs of each household. It can relate to the size, type, location, and accessibility of a property, but can also refer to the standard in which the property is kept, ensuring good quality accommodation is provided and that it remains well maintained.

The definition for an affordable home is also aligned with the specific needs and commitments of every household. Affordability of home is linked with many wider consequences, such as fuel poverty and impacts on physical and mental wellbeing

Health and wellbeing run through every aspect of this strategy. This document's strategic aims and objects are rooted in the fundamental aim of tackling health inequalities through housing to support Thurrock residents to live healthy lives.

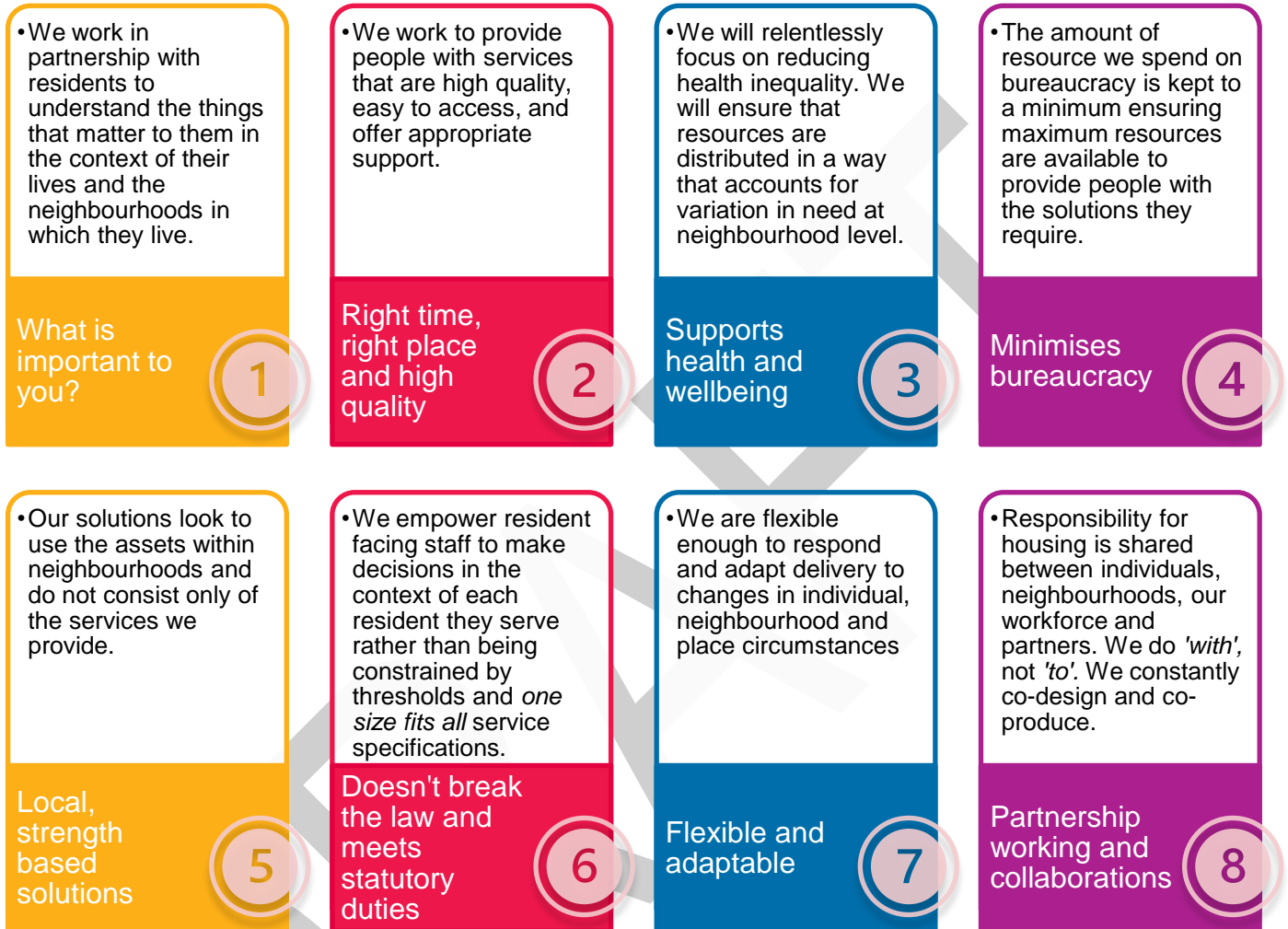
The vision for the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 is aligned with the aims of Domain 5 – Housing and the Environment within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026, outlined below:

Fewer people will be at risk of homelessness, and everyone will have access to high quality affordable homes that meet the needs of Thurrock residents.

Homes and places in Thurrock will provide environments where everyone feels safe, healthy, connected and proud.

Housing Core Principles

This Housing Strategy has been developed in part to set the basis for a new way of working for housing support and services in Thurrock. This strategy and the new way of working follow the below eight principles:



Housing Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives set out in this strategy will support the council in achieving its housing vision. They also align with and support the work and actions identified within the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy as well as the Better Care Together Thurrock: The Case for Further Change strategy.

Deliver Housing Support and Services

- Embed a person-centred approach to housing support and services
- Develop locality and neighbourhood models for integrated housing services

Meet Housing Need

- Identify and provide the right homes for Thurrock based on household need
- Address the housing affordability crisis in Thurrock
- Prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping in Thurrock
- Deliver sustainable estate and housing regeneration
- Review the model of Sheltered Housing provision

Protect Resident Safety

- Improve warmth, safety, and standards in private sector homes
- Invest in and maintain quality council-owned homes
- Strengthen community safety and prevent anti-social behaviour
- Tackle domestic and sexual abuse and violence
- Support vulnerable adults and children
- Improve estate standards

Strengthen Community Engagement and Empowerment

- Improve resident satisfaction and access to information
- Strengthen, integrate and diversify community and resident engagement

Chapter 3 – Background and Context

Legislative and Regulatory Framework

The Housing Strategy has been developed within and reflects current legislation and regulation.

Legislation

Thurrock Council has many housing duties and responsibilities, with only some of these relating to its role as a social housing provider. The council has duties towards homelessness prevention and relief, enforcing property standards and licensing in the private rental sector, and strategic assessments of the borough's current and future housing needs.

At the time of writing this strategy, there a number of new acts and proposed bills that will affect the way that housing support and services are provided during the expected lifetime of this strategy.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The Domestic Abuse Act aims to raise awareness and understanding about the impact of domestic abuse on victims and their families. It intends to further improve the effectiveness of the justice system in providing protection for victims of domestic abuse and bringing perpetrators to justice. It also aims to strengthen the support for victims of abuse by statutory agencies.

Fire Safety Act 2021

The Fire Safety Act places additional duties on responsible persons for multi-occupancy residential buildings, with the legal responsibility of proactively identifying potentially dangerous external wall systems and other structural issues and putting in place measures to deal with them. Responsible persons must make sure that they are up to date with government guidance regarding dealing with dangerous external wall systems and, where necessary, that they engage with competent fire safety professionals to make sure the steps they are taking are suitable and sufficient to deal with the risks posed.

Building Safety Bill

The objective of the Building Safety Bill is to strengthen the overall regulatory system for building safety. It aims to establish a comprehensive new building safety regime concerning the design, construction, and occupation of higher-risk buildings. It aims to achieve this by ensuring there is greater accountability and responsibility for the design and construction of buildings, as well as throughout the lifecycle of buildings.

Social Housing Regulation Bill

The Social Housing Regulation Bill aims to deliver against the commitments made in the social housing white paper for those who live in poor quality social housing. It makes provision for residents to be given performance information so landlords can be held to account and aims to ensure that when residents make a complaint, landlords take quick and effective action to put things right.

In general, new legislation, and in particular new regulation, bring new duties, responsibilities, and burdens on the council. This can pose a risk due to the need to understand and implement measures correctly. Such activity can cause confusion and distraction from service delivery during initial rollout and embedding, and new reporting requirements can be cumbersome and resource intensive. The effective use of technology and analytics applications can go a long way to reducing the level of manual effort required in such circumstances.

The full impact of new regulation and legislation cannot be completely understood until sometime after implementation. However, changing legislation and regulation also provide opportunities to better meet the needs of residents, and in the longer term should improve the level of service and support offered. New legislation can tackle long-standing issues that prevent positive outcomes for residents, as evidenced through the changes introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act.

The list below is not exhaustive; however, it indicates other significant legislation that set the council's housing responsibilities.

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1996
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Local Government Act 2000
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Housing Act 2004
- Equality Act 2006
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
- Localism Act 2011
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Housing and Planning Act 2016
- Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Homes Fit for Human Habitation Act 2018

Regulation

At present, the Regulator of Social Housing has set four consumer standards and will intervene where failure to adhere to the standards has caused or would risk causing serious harm to tenants. As a social housing provider, the council must adhere to these standards.

The four consumer standards are:

- Homes Standard
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Tenancy Standard
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

The Regulator of Social Housing has also set three economic standards. However only the rent standard is currently applicable to the council as a local authority. This standard establishes the maximum weekly social and affordable rents that social landlords can charge.

There are current proposals to introduce a Social Housing Regulation Bill, which would deliver changes to the consumer regulation of social housing. It would strengthen the accountability of landlords for providing safe homes, quality services and treating residents with respect. It would also implement some specific changes to the economic regulation of social housing. These are likely to be introduced during the lifetime of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027.

National Context

The housing landscape is ever-changing, impacted by alterations to government policy, periods of economic change, noteworthy events in the housing sector and other national influences.

Whilst Thurrock does have localised challenges, some of which are outlined in the next section, the strategic approach towards housing in the borough is equally affected by the national context.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper

In late 2020 the Government published its social housing white paper, The Charter for Social Housing Residents. Within this document, the Government set out its intentions to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when required.

The charter outlines the following seven elements that every social housing resident should be able to expect:

- to be safe in your home
- to know how your landlord is performing
- to have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- to be treated with respect
- to have your voice heard by your landlord
- to have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- to be supported to take your first step into ownership

Further to establishing these aspects, the Government announced plans to strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing. It aims to empower the regulator to be proactive in monitoring and enforcing the consumer standards that social housing landlords are held to, and requiring landlords to:

- be transparent about their performance and decision-making so that tenants and the regulator can hold them to account
- put things right when they go wrong
- listen to tenants through effective engagement

Whilst the white paper outlines these intentions, the timelines for implementing all the policies and measures announced in the document remain unclear. However, there is now progress regarding the Social Housing Regulation Bill, and steps have been taken regarding building safety.

It is expected that the Government will undertake periods of engagement and consultation and introduce legislation during the lifetime of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027. However, the housing service has already begun to work proactively to ensure that the council is in a strong position to meet and address the white paper proposals as more information becomes available regarding implementation.

Building and Fire Safety

The Grenfell Tower Fire on 14 June 2017 brought both fire and building safety into sharp focus for housing providers, building managers and residents of high-rise properties across the country. The tragedy triggered a wave of activity, such as tenant engagement roadshows by housing ministers, the development of a social housing green paper, and the commissioning of a review of building regulations and fire safety led by Dame Judith Hackitt.

Published in May 2018, *Building a Safer Future: Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety* set out over 50 recommendations for government to improve and strengthen regulation in the sector.

The report identified many areas of failure within the existing system. It made recommendations to introduce a new regulatory framework, strengthen enforcement powers to ensure safety, and define better the role of duty holders with responsibility for the safety of a whole building.

In addition, the report drew particular attention to the importance of engaging with residents, strategies for engagement, and ensuring that residents had access to information and involvement in decision making.

The report also highlights the strength of structured engagement through residents' associations and tenant panels and the need for cultural change in the relationship between landlords and residents.

The council's duties and obligations relating to building and fire safety are likely to be broadened in the coming months and years due to the progression of the Building Safety Bill and the commencement of the Fire Safety Act 2021. As such, the Housing Strategy must respond to these and flex with any newly introduced duties or responsibilities.

Climate and Sustainability

The Climate Change Act 2008 set a target in legislation to reduce UK emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses to net-zero by 2050. More recently, measures have been introduced to support this aim, such as the intention to phase out gas-fired boilers in new properties by 2035 and increase the use of electric vehicles across the country by mandating that all new homes must have charging points provided.

In October 2019, Thurrock Council passed a motion whereby it declared a climate emergency and set out to take urgent action to reduce its carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030. Initial plans are being developed to respond to the climate crisis by ensuring that council operations are carbon-neutral by this time. As a social housing provider with around 10,000 properties in its stock, to achieve net-zero by 2050, many significant financial and logistical challenges will need to be addressed.

COVID-19 and Housing

Concerns remain across the Housing sector that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on housing and homelessness has not yet fully emerged.

Initiatives such as 'Everyone In' and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and legislation to temporarily ban evictions and extend eviction notice periods, provided some stability and security

to households during significant uncertainty throughout much of 2020 and 2021, but these were not permanent resolutions.

With these temporary protections now removed and considering growing inflation levels and household costs, there are fears of a surge of households experiencing financial hardship and, therefore, at risk of homelessness. The full extent of the impacts on the private rental sector and the broader housing market in Thurrock is uncertain; however, the Housing Strategy aims to consider these factors to adapt and respond in the event of any such spike.

Levelling Up White Paper

The Levelling Up White Paper outlines 12 'missions across four broad areas with the aim to reduce inequality and transform the UK by spreading opportunity and prosperity. These areas are:

- boosting productivity and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging
- spreading opportunities and improving public services, especially in those areas where they are weakest
- restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost
- empowering local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

It also sets an aim under mission 10 that by 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas and an ambition for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest-performing areas.

Local Context

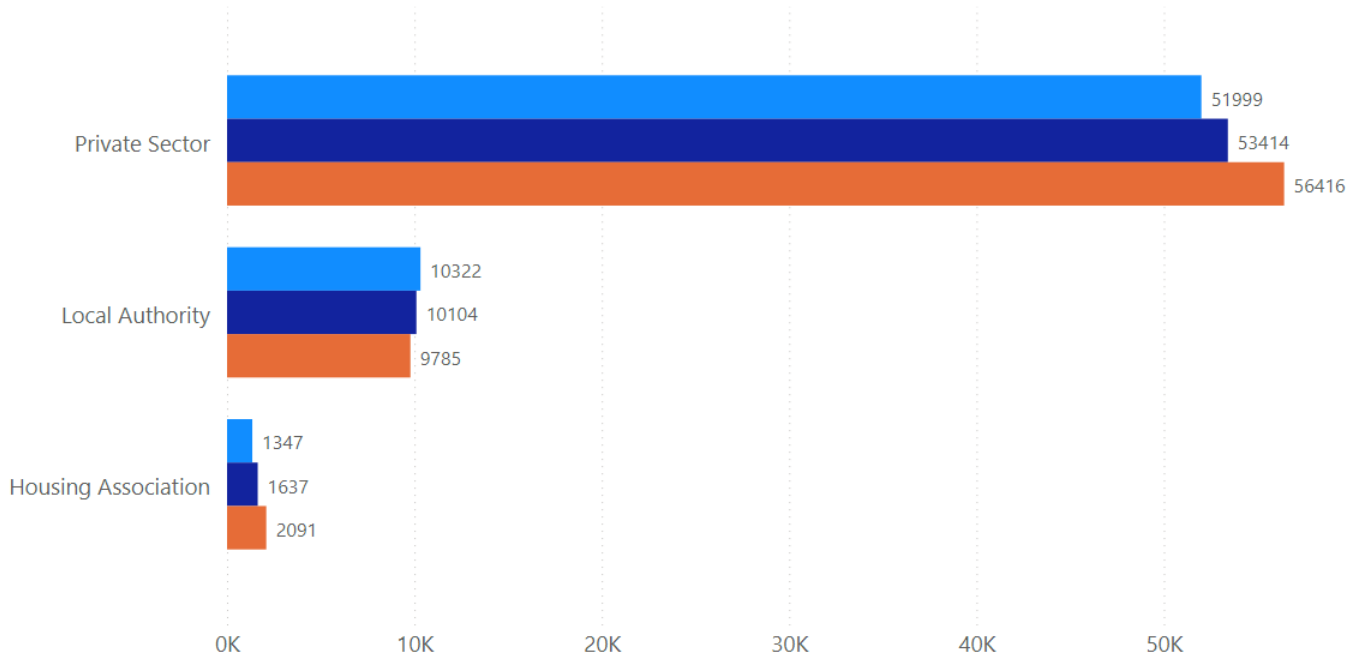
Housing Tenure Mix in Thurrock

This section of the strategy provides information on the current housing landscape in Thurrock, setting out estimates of the tenure mix in the borough and outlining the shifting distribution of tenure types over time.

The chart below provides estimates of the number of dwellings in Thurrock, broken down by ownership type.

Number of Dwellings by Ownership Type

● 2010 ● 2015 ● 2020

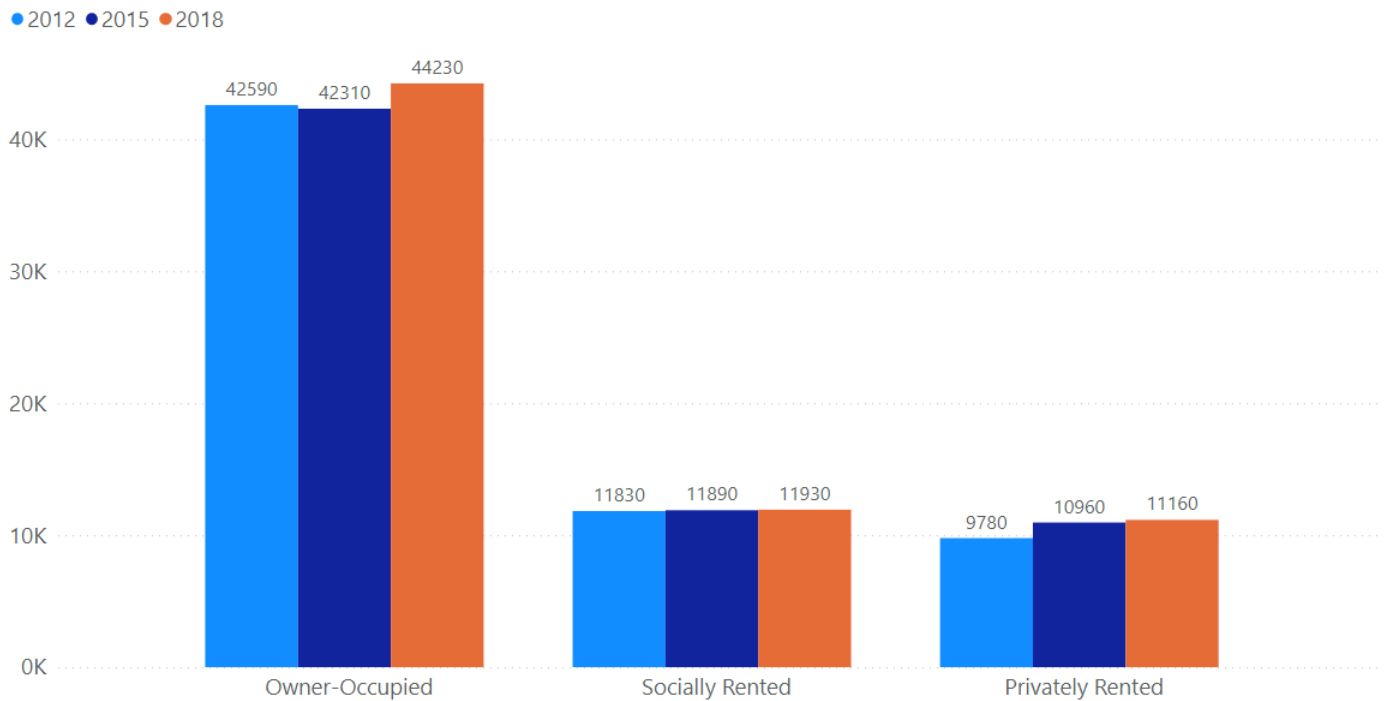


This chart illustrates a net reduction in the number of properties owned by the local authority; however, an increase can be observed in the number of properties owned by housing associations (also known as private registered providers of social housing or registered social landlords).

The chart also indicates an increase in the number of privately owned dwellings in Thurrock. These figures, published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), do not provide any details to determine which privately owned dwellings are owner-occupied or used in the private rental sector.

Alternative estimates by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicate the split between privately rented properties and those occupied by the owner. It should be noted that these are not official statistics, but they do provide an illustrative figure for comparison. In this chart, socially rented refers to the combined number of dwellings owned by the local authority and those owned by housing associations.

ONS Estimated Number of Dwellings by Tenure



These figures show that all tenures saw net increases in the number of dwellings between 2012 and 2018; however, the proportion of owner-occupied and socially rented properties fell during this period. Conversely, the proportion of properties in Thurrock being used in the private rental sector increased significantly.

Although both charts above are presented as estimates, they confirm that there has been an increase in the number of dwellings in Thurrock and appear to support the anecdotal evidence that recent years have seen an increase in the number of private rental sector properties in the borough.

During Census 2021, a range of tenure and housing-related data was collected. Once this has been published, it will be possible to reconcile these estimates against accurate figures provided through the Census activity. The ONS aim to confirm the final release schedule in February 2022.

Affordability

Affordability of accommodation in Thurrock is an ongoing challenge, both in the private rental sector and for those aiming to purchase properties.

Further detail outlining the affordability crisis in the borough is explored in Chapter 4 of this strategy.

Social Housing Provision

In Thurrock, the council is the primary provider of social housing. Based on data published by MHCLG (now DLUHC), as of 31 March 2020, it was estimated that 14.3% of dwellings in Thurrock were owned by the council, with other registered providers of social housing owning less than 3.1% of homes in the borough.

The impact of these figures means that for every 47 council-owned dwellings, there were 10 registered provider-owned dwellings, representing the fifth-lowest ratio for stock-retaining local authorities in England at the time of writing.

Although the number of registered provider-owned dwellings has been increasing over time, this imbalance has led to additional pressure and demand on Thurrock Council from households as it is seen to be the primary provider of affordable accommodation in the borough.

Thames Freeport

It was announced in October 2021 that the Thames Freeport, one of eight announced in the UK, would be able to commence operations. It is anticipated to deliver transformational change across the entire borough, creating thousands of new jobs and attracting substantial investment into Thurrock over the next 25 years.

The successful delivery of the Thames Freeport in Thurrock is expected to contribute significantly to achieving wider place agenda ambitions. It will bring together physical, economic, social, and environmental renewal to improve the wellbeing of communities, provide opportunities and help ensure places are fit for the future.

The expected creation of jobs is likely to impact housing need in the local area. As the Thames Freeport develops and progress on the Local Plan continues, it is expected that this impact can be quantified, and measures identified to address housing need.

Purfleet-on-Thames

Purfleet Centre Regeneration Limited is a joint venture between Urban Catalyst and Swan Housing in partnership with Thurrock Council to regenerate over 140 acres to create Purfleet-on-Thames.

Developed on healthy town principles, Purfleet-on-Thames will create a new waterfront destination on the River Thames; an international create hub and high quality new residential with place making at its core. The vision for Purfleet-on-Thames includes:

- A state-of-the-art film and TV studio facility and related creative industry hub
- Attractive new waterfront commercial and retail space
- Up to 2,850 new homes, including significant health and education facilities
- Community facilities
- Leisure uses
- Upgraded and additional public transport facilities

Lower Thames Crossing

National Highways proposes building a new Lower Thames Crossing that will include a major highway through Thurrock. Project proposals include two new 2.5-mile tunnels under the River Thames, 14.5 miles of new road and the construction and alteration of structures, including bridges, buildings, utilities, and tunnels.

The proposals for the Lower Thames Crossing have been assessed as directly and substantially compromising the ability to meet the need for new housing in Thurrock in a sustainable manner. It would lead to the direct loss of approximately 20 existing dwellings, and it is estimated that 1,400 homes would be affected by blight.

The impact on local housing would not only be affected upon completion of the project. During the construction phases of the Lower Thames Crossing, there will be the need for accommodation for over 900 workers involved with the construction of the northern parts of the project in Thurrock. It is expected that this need would be met through a combination of rented properties visitor accommodation such as hotels and owner-occupied homes. This would significantly increase demand and may negatively impact affordability and supply for Thurrock residents and may be a matter of significant concern should the Lower Thames Crossing construction project be awarded a Development Consent Order.

DRAFT

Chapter 4

Deliver Housing Support and Services

This chapter proposes a reframing of the approach taken to support households interacting with the council. Instead of viewing a set of 'problems' requiring resolution by disconnected teams, the Housing Strategy encourages a strengths-based 'whole person' approach, connected within a wider system that includes adult social care, children's services, public health, NHS partners, the wider community, voluntary and faith sector, and existing assets within the community, that can all positively support people to live healthily and well.

DRAFT

Embed a person-centred approach to housing support and services

Context

Thurrock residents approach and interact with council services, delivery partners and other organisations regarding a range of housing-related matters every day. Whilst all will aim to help achieve positive outcomes or resolve any presented issues that fall within their defined remit, the current approach can create barriers to success as few challenges can be appropriately addressed by any one party in isolation.

Homelessness, for example, cannot be addressed in Thurrock solely by the housing service of the council – it requires far greater collaboration and partnership. It also requires all those working alongside individuals and households to see ‘whole human beings’ with their strengths, which may have further needs beyond the lack of a safe, secure or suitable home.

This strength-based ‘whole person’ approach should be embraced and adopted by those working with residents in the borough, considering all the elements and factors that may have contributed to their experience.

Rather than responding to people approaching the council as a collection of fragmented teams and services, each trying to tackle their own ‘problem’, it is intended that we move in a direction where parties are connected and operating within a wider **system** beyond traditional organisational boundaries. Housing forms one part of this, alongside others such as adult social care, children’s services, public health, NHS partners, the wider community, voluntary and faith sector, and existing assets within the community.

When viewing an individual or household through the lens of a wider system, greater opportunities are available for the coordination of more holistic approaches to support relating to their housing need and other personal circumstances, which also complement their strengths.

A key focus within the housing service and with those the council engaged with in the development of this strategy is tenancy sustainment – supporting those who may find it difficult to maintain their tenancy or risk losing their home for whatever reason. The factors affecting the health of a tenancy can be complex. A ‘whole person’ approach adopted within a wider housing system allows the opportunity to explore underlying causes for the vulnerability of the tenancy and work together to implement appropriate early interventions to reduce the risk of that household reaching the point of crisis.

As teams and services operate within this broader system, every interaction with a resident or household will present an opportunity for continuous engagement, learning, and improvement. This can be in the context of supporting those individuals by learning about the barriers preventing positive outcomes and designing ways to overcome them, or by identifying systemic issues through shared experience and practice that would require wider resolution.

Impact

The current system fragmentation impacts the ability to work with residents and reach positive health, wellbeing and housing outcomes, ultimately affecting resident aspirations to achieve their vision of a good life.

The impact of current ways of siloed working explored above impacts upon residents achieving what matters to them due to referrals, handoffs, thresholds, and inefficiency in existing processes.

This inefficiency and disconnection between those working to support Thurrock residents leads to a greater number of uncoordinated interventions, increases levels of failure demand and further underlines ineffective uses of available resources.

Available support provision is currently based on previous professional experience, rather than fully considering the needs and strengths of individuals or what the community is available to offer without reliance on formal services.

By moving in a direction where support and services exist within a person-centred system offering a truly 'human' approach, residents will be empowered to be able to achieve more of what matters to them and reach their version of a good life.

This approach will improve working relationships, knowledge sharing and positive outcomes across the system.

Support will be provided in collaboration with the community and focuses first and foremost on what the community can offer. Residents will maximise opportunities to stay as healthy as possible, require fewer interventions from services and achieving better outcomes as a result.

Importantly, residents will be able to find the right solution for them, first time and in the right place, mitigating against the risks and detrimental impacts of crisis and driving down the cost of failure demand experienced by individuals and organisations.

Recent action

Many of the most successful areas of transformation in Thurrock are already operating using person-centred system principles. These include the council's Local Area Coordinators, Community Led Solutions, Community Builders, Wellbeing Teams, and Integrated Primary and Community Mental Health Care.

These teams are delivering better outcomes for residents by freeing frontline staff from pre-defined service specifications, KPIs and bureaucracy. Instead, they are empowered to co-design bespoke solutions with residents, responding to individual context.

The housing service has started to develop and embed person-centred approaches into the way staff work with and support residents, including pilots in the Housing Operations and Housing Solutions service areas.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will embed the housing core principles and person-centred approach to housing services in service provision in order to provide tailored and bespoke support to residents	<p>We will launch test and learn pilots in the housing operations and housing solutions services to develop the person-centred approach to housing</p> <p>We will take the learning from these pilots to inform and implement a plan to embed person-centred principles across the wider housing service</p>	<p>Residents will be experience support that is bespoke, tailored and co-designed to meet their specific circumstances and needs</p> <p>Residents will benefit from housing services that focus on prioritising the things that matter in order for residents to achieve their vision of a good life above all else</p>

What?	How?	Impact?
We will reduce bureaucracy in order to deliver outcomes that matter to residents at pace	We will minimise delays due to service eligibility thresholds and management decision-making wherever possible by devolving decision making authority and accountability to resident facing staff	Residents will receive quicker outcomes, removing the frustration and anxiety experienced through protracted referral or decision-making pathways
We will adopt a whole system approach to supporting residents in order to reduce fragmentation and duplication of services	We will explore the system from a housing perspective through the test and learn pilots. We will use this learning to identify where duplication exists in the wider system and find opportunities for where effective coordination can lead to better outcomes for residents	Residents will experience greater opportunities for the coordination of more holistic approaches to support relating to their housing need and other personal circumstances which also complement their strengths

Develop locality and neighbourhood models for integrated housing services

Context

Housing support, much like public services more broadly, is often fragmented into specific areas that each focus on resolving single ‘problems’. However, people want to be recognised and supported by a system that views them as a complex individual aiming to achieve their vision of a good life.

Thresholds and eligibility criteria exist across the public sector, and housing support and services are no exception. Support may only be provided to those identified as ‘eligible’, and that support is often standardised and focussed solely on one single need, determined on a borough-wide level.

People are likely to have multiple interconnected needs that would benefit from the support of multiple teams or organisations, but the current approach to obtaining that support is often lengthy, fragmented and features with elements of duplication. Support is often provided through formal services when community organisations and assets may already exist to be able to meet these needs.

During the time that an individual attempts to navigate referral pathways and evidence their eligibility, it is highly likely that the need for housing support will become greater. This in turn will exacerbate any other connected or related support need, driving the individual towards crisis rather than prevention or early intervention.

This way of working increases rather than manages demand. It increases bureaucracy, costs, delays and wasted resource and has negative impacts on those seeking support as well as those providing it.

Impact

Thurrock requires a system that people can access at any point, mostly from within their local community, to get the support they require. This support must be coordinated and focused on achieving what matters most to them. Those providing a service must work together in the community and with the community to deploy resources effectively, overcome organisational boundaries, navigate unhelpful process and bureaucracy, and deliver an integrated bespoke solution. Resource must be used collectively, with solutions provided incorporating community assets, technology and provision that is creative and diverse.

The *Better Care Together Thurrock: Case for Further Change* strategic document seeks to address this issue, primarily from a health and care perspective, however it combines this with a broader view to also include other areas that can affect (or can be affected) by these needs. One such area relates to housing.

The *Case for Further Change* proposes a transformation from the current system architecture and ways of working to move instead towards integrated locality teams. It intends to create a single Integrated Locality Network of professionals who will be able to collaborate more easily and effectively with each other, and with residents. The overall aim is to embed the maximum amount of care and support at locality and neighbourhood level within a multi-disciplinary network of staff who can collaborate to design integrated solutions with residents rather than make onward referrals.

The *Case for Further Change* suggests the incorporation of specific housing services into these Integrated Locality Networks, and the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 supports this intention.

Recent action

Thurrock has a team of Local Area Coordinators (LACs), each aligned to specific localities and neighbourhoods within the borough. The primary role of the LAC is to develop a detailed understanding of community assets, networks, services, organisations and groups within their area, but also more broadly across the borough. LACs then work with residents to find pragmatic solutions to problems, drawing on these community resources before considering commissioned or statutory services.

The service always starts with the question “What does a good life mean to you?”, making it holistic and bespoke. Instead of simply assessing or referring residents into services they:

- invest enough time in understanding what a good life looks like to the individual or family, and how they could get there
- help people to build their own capacity and connections, so that they can stay strong and independent
- build new community connections or capacity where they do not exist

LACs work in a truly integrated way and are able to navigate across services and organisations to find solutions and overcome barriers with the aim of preventing people from reaching crisis.

Community Led Support (CLS) is an approach to social work that means that social work teams build networks with other professionals within a specific locality so that they can be mobilised to provide a joined-up response, rather than one that purely considers adult social care needs.

Teams are based in the community and aligned with the four Primary Care Network (PCN) areas. These teams work solely within their locality, based out of a number of different community settings.

The approach represents a radical departure from traditional social work models based on assessing deficits and prescribing commissioned services.

CLS has been successful with numerous case studies showing how people have been effectively supported in a different way. Early successes have included reduced waiting times, improved access – with regular ‘drop in’ sessions being organised close to where people live and working with other professionals and organisations in the area, including community-based groups and the community, voluntary and faith sector, to develop innovative and streamlined ways of delivering what people required and how they required it.

The learning from LAC and CLS has provided a blueprint for redesigned local integrated care and support. Such approaches do not rely on thresholds and eligibility before they help someone. They identify what the person requires to live a good life, and in doing so, they help to put in place a plan that focuses on preventing that person’s health and wellbeing from declining.

Both CLS and LAC initiatives have shown the power of place-based working and of taking time to have conversations with people that focus on what matters to them. This has led to very different solutions being developed, many of which have prevented and reduced the need for services or helped to reduce the reliance on a service response.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will develop a neighbourhood model for housing services in order to better focus on delivering what matters to residents in different localities	<p>We will support the ambition of the <i>Case for Further Change</i> by bringing housing together at locality level and will empower front line staff from across housing to form relationships and networks across the system, to work together with residents to design and deliver meaningful, personal and holistic solutions</p> <p>We will create opportunities to pool budgets and resources, simplify existing complex decision pathways and reduce the number of referrals made by offering support directly</p>	Residents will be supported by housing staff with an understanding of local priorities, networks and assets, improving the range of positive outcomes that can be delivered
We will expand housing locality working into the Integrated Locality Network in order to collaborate more effectively with residents and other professionals	We will embed housing support and services within the Integrated Locality Networks encompassing a wide range of health, care and third sector partners, allowing staff to collaborate with each other and with residents to co-design bespoke integrated solutions rather than making referrals	Residents will experience improved integration between related but historically disjointed services, increasing and improving access to information and sources of support
We will expand the knowledge and skills of housing staff in order to better support residents	<p>We will expand the knowledge of housing officers relating to health, care and social needs to improve the support that can be offered directly to residents within localities</p> <p>We will provide training and share knowledge relating to housing services and support with others across the Integrated Locality Networks to strengthen the shared understanding of all partners</p>	Residents will be better supported by housing staff with broad knowledge and skills that are able to directly help with matters relating to health and care, and which can navigate the wider system to identify the most appropriate course of action
We will create new Community Case worker 'blended roles' able to co-design integrated, bespoke solutions with residents	We will use test and learn pilots to create new 'Community Caseworker roles' that are able to deliver a wider range of solutions to residents, with skills traditionally delivered in silos by different teams within Adult Social Care, NHS functions, housing, debt and the community, voluntary and faith sector	Residents with more complex problems that traditionally needed input from multiple different teams and services will find it easy to access a bespoke solution that genuinely solves their problem

Chapter 5

Meet Housing Need

Identifying and understanding housing need can be complex, and any unmet need can have a significant and lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of people. This chapter sets an approach to use a range of information sources to build an accurate understanding of current and future housing need, creating the evidence base for directing housing development.

This chapter considers how the council can explore, understand, and address the diverse housing needs of the borough's population. It also shares residents' priorities regarding the standard of homes in Thurrock and how homes can be developed and improved in the borough.

The development and quality of homes have direct relationships with the health and wellbeing of individuals. The adherence to suitable space standards, ample provision of affordable housing and the inclusion of appropriate green and open space in new developments will positively affect the lives of residents who will live there.

Identify and provide the right homes for Thurrock based on household need

Context

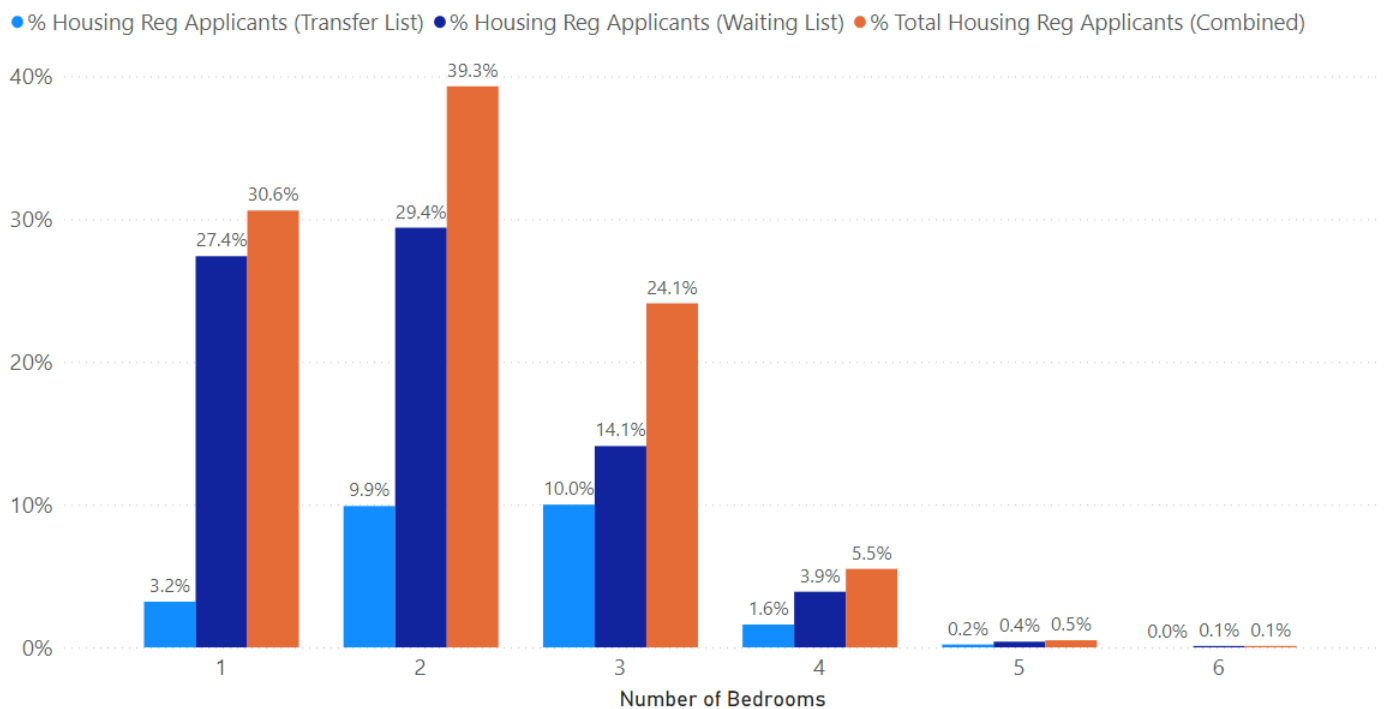
Every household has a housing need that is aligned to and reflective of their circumstances at that point in time. Housing need can relate to:

- property affordability
- the number of bedrooms required by a household
- property location
- any adaptations, alterations, or specific property types to ensure accessibility
- care or support services
- independent living

During the engagement and development of this strategy, many residents were concerned that the right types of accommodation were insufficiently available to meet their needs. Affordability was cited as one of the most significant barriers to securing accommodation within Thurrock with growing inflation, increasing household costs and the continuation of welfare reforms placing incomes under pressure. Residents also highlighted difficulties in accessing adapted or adaptable properties in the borough.

The chart below presents a snapshot of general needs housing need by property size. It includes applicants that have placed at least one bid in the past two years or have had their application registered in the past two years.

General Needs Housing Need by Number of Bedrooms



Based on the council’s housing register data, the greatest demand is for two-bedroom properties, followed by one-bedroom properties.

The most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was produced in 2017. A SHMA is a technical study intended to help the council’s planning and housing services to understand how many homes will be needed during the assessment period – in this case, between 2014 and 2037.

The approach to produce a SHMA uses demographic modelling to estimate how the population and household profile could change, assuming that housing needs are met in full by estimating size and type of housing needed based on tendencies of existing households. It provides a separate calculation of affordable housing need, accounting for backlog and newly arising need and considering the role of different products, like First Homes.

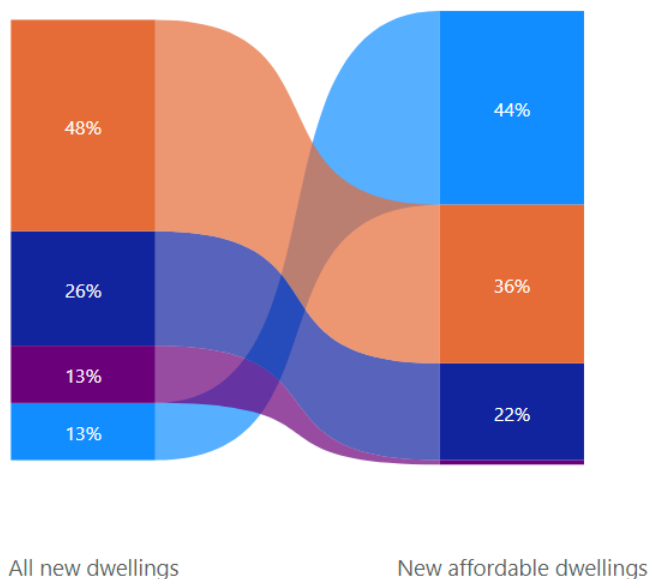
Finally, the SHMA gives specific consideration for the needs of different groups identified, such as:

- Older people
- People with disabilities
- Families
- Young people
- Privately renting households
- Self-builders

The 2017 assessment indicated an objectively assessed need of 1074 to 1381 properties per annum across all tenures for Thurrock between 2014 and 2037, identifying a net annual affordable housing need of 472 new dwellings. The proportions for the required property sizes identified through the SHMA are shared in the chart below.

SHMA Required Property Sizes by Number of Bedrooms

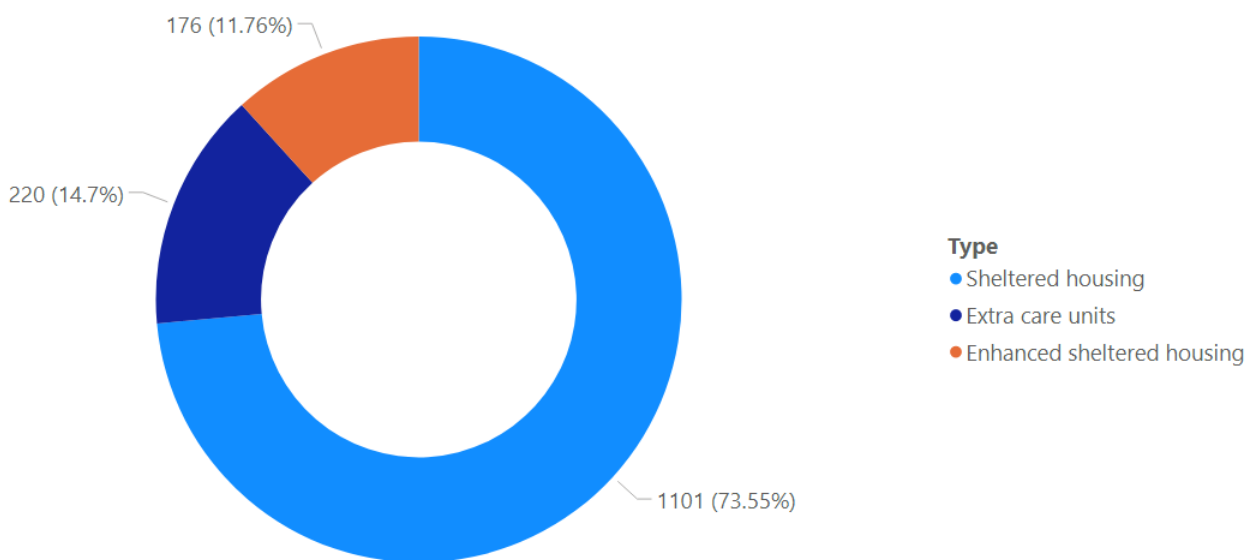
● 1 Bed ● 2 Bed ● 3 Bed ● 4 Bed+



There are significant variations between the proportions suggested by the existing SHMA and the data available for the council’s housing register. It should be noted that the SHMA considers the housing need for the entire current and future population of Thurrock and recommends that the council continues to monitor the number of bedrooms required by households in priority need on the housing registers.

The SHMA identified the potential need for additional specialist older persons housing in Thurrock over the assessment period, including residential care housing. The total requirements across the assessment period for each type of specialist older persons’ housing are presented below, alongside the average number of dwellings needed per annum.

SHMA Specialist Older Persons Housing Requirements (2014-2037)



Feedback during the development of this strategy and evidence presented above identify concerns with regards to affordability and availability of homes for Thurrock residents, in relation to home ownership as well as property rental. Residents also shared views regarding the availability of new homes that are adapted or adaptable for accessibility requirements.

There is a clear need for good quality, sustainable and affordable housing to be provided in the borough. It is key to the wider growth agenda, enabling residents to live healthy and well lives and means that local residents are available to take up the new employment opportunities created by growth in the borough.

As a social housing provider, the council has a pipeline of future development projects aligned with identified local need.

Following the abolition of the HRA borrowing cap in October 2018 Thurrock Council, as a local authority with an HRA, is no longer constrained by government controls over borrowing for housebuilding. Instead, the council is now able to borrow against their expected rental income.

Additional flexibilities regarding the use of Right to Buy sales receipts were introduced in March 2021, including included raising the proportion of project costs that can be funded from the

receipts from 30% to 40%, permitting their use in developing shared ownership homes, and extending the period by which they must be used by from three to five years after receipt.

These changes mean that there will be wider scope to fund the development of new council-owned homes, and there is currently a pipeline of future projects aligned with identified local need that can now be taken forward.

Land that is suitable for these types of developments could include:

- plots of available land in areas where there is existing social housing
- smaller developments in mixed development areas on existing council land
- redevelopment of existing housing stock where due to its age or condition will need to be redeveloped. This can include both small-scale development and large-scale housing regeneration projects.

Given the demand for smaller sized properties as evidenced within this strategy, much of the focus of council-owned developments in the near future is anticipated to primarily be one and two-bedroom homes; however, there will be a mix of homes including three and four-bedroom developments for growing families which can in turn make smaller homes available to be relet where the new occupiers are moving from an existing council-owned property.

Thurrock Regeneration Ltd (TRL) offers another route for the provision of new, high-quality housing across the borough. As a development company set-up and funded by loans from Thurrock Council, it can deliver properties for market sale, private rent, affordable rent and shared ownership, and then reinvest any profits into further housing development or to support services. TRL can support brownfield redevelopment and ensure that sites can be taken forward where other developers may be deterred by feasibility by accessing funding via partners such as the local enterprise partnership, the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA), and Homes England.

However, the council cannot meet the needs of all households in Thurrock in isolation. As such, work is needed to encourage and attract other registered providers of social housing and housing developers to construct homes in the borough, either directly or through joint ventures with the council, to meet the needs evidenced through local analysis and in the strategic housing market assessment.

Impact

There is an evidenced shortfall in the number of new dwellings in Thurrock compared to the identified need in the 2017 SHMA. Based on forecast need of 1074 to 1381 properties per annum since 2014, between 2016 and 2020 the cumulative total number of new dwellings required would be in the region of 5370 to 6905.

The DLUHC figures shared in the local context section of this strategy estimate that the number of dwellings in Thurrock increased by 3137 during this period. This is between 42% and 55% lower than required.

It is likely that the data provided in the SHMA update in 2017 is not accurately representative of present need given the length of time that has passed and the ambitious economic development and growth plans that are now in place for Thurrock; however, anecdotal evidence suggests that

the number of new properties required per annum is unlikely to be lower than the previously published recommendations.

This undersupply compared to demand is one factor in the significant challenges for residents to find and securing suitable accommodation in Thurrock.

Demand that exceeds supply contributes to the rising levels of housing unaffordability within Thurrock. In the private rental sector high demand has led to landlords seeking to increase rental costs, whereas in the property market demand has raised asking prices, putting first time buyers under further pressure due to the requirement for larger deposits.

This undersupply has also led to fewer homes being developed to allow overcrowded families and those with adult children living at home to move into a property that is the right size for their needs and has also impacted upon the supply new homes built with adaptability in mind.

Pressures exist not only in the private sector but also within social housing. Demand far outstrips supply for the council's stock and there is a disproportionately small amount of housing association properties within the borough as an alternative.

Recent action

The development of a new SHMA is currently underway to update the understanding of local housing need, jointly commissioned by the local authorities across South Essex. This piece of work is anticipated to identify the housing need for Thurrock until 2040 and will guide the development of the new Thurrock Local Plan.

The council does have a pipeline of new build schemes, and these plans are informed by regular reviews of the council's Housing Register to provide an indicator of social and affordable housing demand, including any additional support needs or property adaptations that may be required.

This information has also been used to guide developments undertaken by other registered providers of social housing, collectively working to increase the number of affordable properties available to local residents in Thurrock.

Focussing on a particular subset of housing need, the 2018 Thurrock Council Annual Public Health Report considered the topic of older people's health and housing. Through the development of this document, partners, and stakeholders from across the council came together to explore and demonstrate the link between good housing and health, and the significant role that the home plays in the lives of older people.

An affordability joint strategic needs assessment has progressed well in partnership with the council's Public Health team. The detailed findings and understanding provided by that assessment will be taken forward as actions of this strategy. They will feature alongside the development of a 'Thurrock Affordability' standard that considers local costs of living, local income, and housing market prices.

Over the past two years, 119 new council-owned homes have been built in the borough. In the 2020-21 financial year 29 new homes were provided at the Alma Court development in South

Grays and a further 53 new homes constructed at Heathlyn Close and Claudian Way in Chadwell St Mary.

Case Study - Healthlyn Close/Claudian Way New Build Development

The Heathlyn Close/Claudian Way development project delivered 53 homes arranged around a new focal point for Chadwell St Mary.

The site for the development was located on an open green space in the centre of Chadwell St Mary, near the much larger Orsett Heath. It was well located regarding existing schools, public transport, and community facilities.

Most residents that attended engagement events that the council held agreed that the Claudian Way site was suitable for residential development and favoured an approach which included bungalows and a small mixture of flats and family houses. This approach met the needs of the local community and gave local residents confidence that they would not be overlooked by the proposed new buildings.

A mixture of property sizes and types were provided at the development to respond to the differing needs of the community.

- 8 x 1-bedroom flats
- 14 x 2-bedroom flats
- 15 x 1-bedroom bungalows
- 3 x 2-bedroom bungalows
- 1 x 2-bedroom wheelchair adapted bungalow
- 2 x 3-bedroom wheelchair adapted bungalows
- 10 x 3-bedroom houses

All homes were handed over into the council's ownership to be let at affordable rents within Local Housing Allowance rates.

A local lettings plan set out that 75% of the first offers of flats and houses within the plan would be made to current residents of Chadwell St Mary. The 21 bungalows at this site were not included in the local lettings plan as a reflection of the borough-wide need for these types of properties.

In total, 31 properties at Healthlyn Close/Claudian Way were let to existing residents of Chadwell St Mary through the local lettings plan and usual allocations process, including all the houses, over two-thirds of the flats and six of the bungalows at the development.

The remaining 21 properties were let to Thurrock residents who lived outside of the Chadwell St Mary ward, including one care leaver supported into independent accommodation.

Further to this, in 2021-22 the council let 35 properties built to HAPPI standards at Beaconsfield Place in Tilbury and two further wheelchair accessible homes in an innovative scheme at Defoe Parade in Chadwell St Mary.

Planning approval has been secured for the provision of four new council homes at Loewen Road in Chadwell St Mary and for a multi-tenure project at Culver Centre and Field in South Ockendon, to be delivered through Thurrock Regeneration Limited.

There is also an existing pipeline of proposed projects, such as the redevelopment of part of the Civic Offices site for further council-owned homes. The current number of potential dwellings on new build projects under consideration is 504, featuring a mix of council-owned properties and other delivery approaches.

Any sites that become approved for housing development and are held within the General Fund may be offered to Thurrock Regeneration Limited, subject to Cabinet approval. Those sites will generally be required to deliver 35% affordable housing in line with planning policy with the affordable housing offered for sale to the Housing Revenue Account.

The council has also acquired over 120 existing properties from the local housing market for use within its housing stock, utilised as part of a wider plan to transform the council's temporary accommodation offer.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will use housing knowledge and data to influence and support the development of the Local Plan to ensure that future planning policy is representative of the needs of Thurrock residents	We will continue to support the development and delivery of the Local Plan, using a data and evidence-based approach that takes into consideration the feedback and priorities of residents	Residents will benefit from the development of planning policy that is fit for purpose, fit for the future and encourages the types of homes and community infrastructure that will provide the foundations for good lives
We will identify and understand housing need in Thurrock in order to deliver more social and affordable housing for households in the borough	<p>We will use data from the SHMA 2022 and the council's housing register, alongside engagement with residents on their experiences of living in our properties and their preferences for homes for the future to steer the development of council-owned homes and the plans of other providers of social housing in Thurrock</p> <p>We will use local letting plans for all council-led developments to safeguard that at least 75% of new homes are provided to residents with connections to the surrounding area</p>	Residents will have access to a range of new build homes that are affordable, support their housing need and that prioritise providing housing for people with an established connection to the local area
We will build homes that can respond and adapt to changing housing needs throughout life in order to ensure individuals live independently in suitable accommodation for longer	<p>We will develop and implement an older persons' housing strategy that will direct the future development of council-owned housing for older people, aligned to principles such as HAPPI and Lifetime Homes, and inform the developments of others to deliver homes that align to HAPPI</p> <p>We will include accessible homes and HAPPI standards in new council-led development schemes</p>	Residents will have access to housing that is adaptable and will facilitate independent living for longer, allowing households to remain settled in their home and avoiding the upheaval and disruption associated with moving home
We will tackle direct and indirect discrimination in order to ensure that every Thurrock resident can access suitable accommodation	We will examine the factors leading to discrimination in housing that limit and prevent access to accommodation and implement a plan to tackle these	Residents will not experience housing discrimination and will be able to secure safe, suitable and affordable accommodation

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will deliver and refresh the council's housing development programme in order to identify new opportunities to provide at least 500 new social homes for rent</p>	<p>We will continue to deliver homes as part of the council's housing development programme, championing high standards of design and construction on new affordable housing projects</p> <p>We will continue to identify and progress new sites for the programme pipeline with consideration to the range of delivery methods</p> <p>We will undertake regular assessments of existing and emerging housing delivery options, relating both to construction and provision to ensure that the viability of any such opportunities can be understood and progressed as appropriate</p>	<p>Residents will have greater access to good quality social housing across the borough as a result of increased supply</p>

Address the housing affordability crisis in Thurrock

Context

Nationally, housing affordability has worsened over the past 20 years, with London and the South East containing some of the country's most unaffordable areas. There has been a decline in the proportion of owner occupiers and an increase in the proportion of people in private rented accommodation.

While private rental has advantages such as greater flexibility to move home, currently the sector also contains the highest proportion of poor-quality homes, offers the least stability, and is the most expensive relative to the monthly cost of social rent and mortgage fees.

Although definitions and schemes exist to explain what affordable housing can be, there is no single methodology or model for determining what constitutes 'affordable' housing.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework, published in July 2021, defines affordable housing as "housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market" and falls into one or more of the following:

- Affordable housing for rent
- Starter homes
- Discounted market sales housing
- Other affordable routes to homeownership

The document goes into greater detail for each of the above four categories, referring to schemes and models such as shared ownership, equity loans, social rent, and affordable rent. However, many of these 'affordable' housing products would not be affordable to lower-income households.

There are models for affordability, such as the Housing Costs to Income Ratio (HCIR), that suggests that if a household is spending more than a third of its net income on rent or mortgage costs, that accommodation would not be deemed to be affordable. The HCIR does not take into consideration other property related bills such as council tax or utility costs. There is also the standard measure outlined in an earlier section of this report of 'Affordable Rent' being 80% of median market rents.

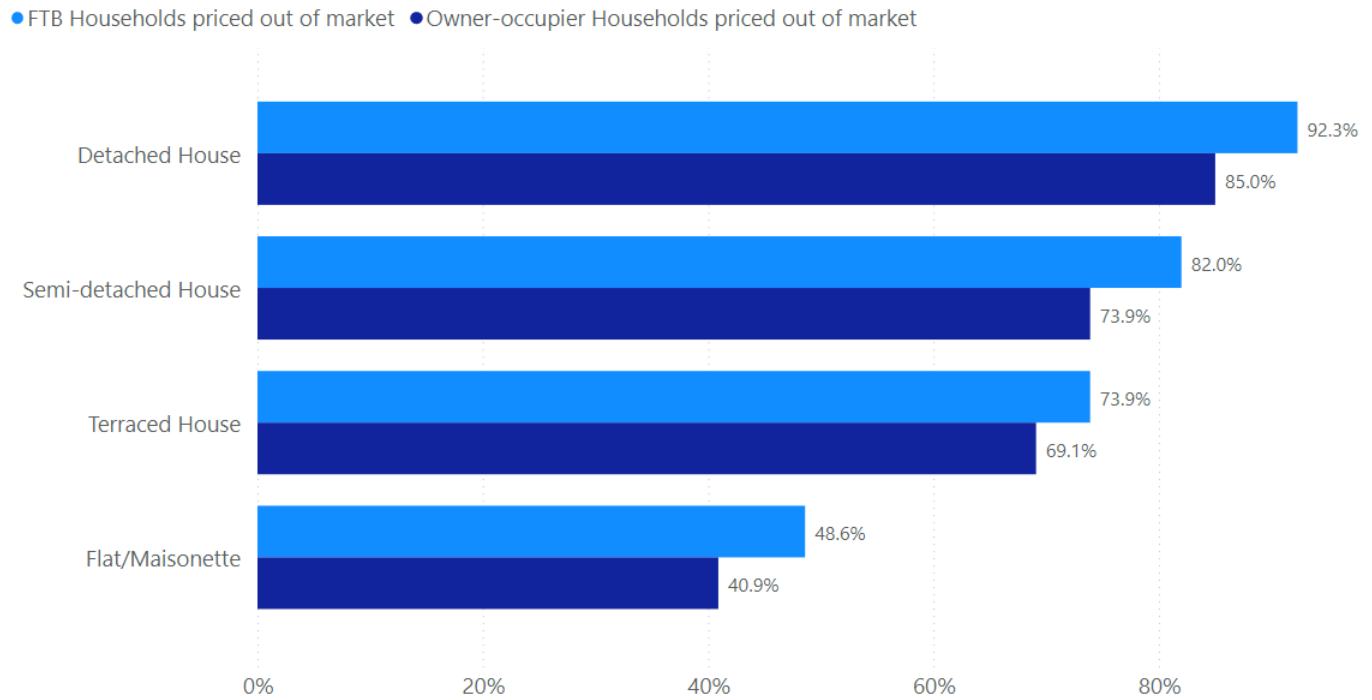
The greatest challenge in defining affordability is that it is subjective and heavily influenced by each household's circumstances and housing needs. Determining what 'affordable' means based solely on market rents does not consider the disparity between the incomes of households, nor does it consider the source of those incomes.

Data assessed as part of an affordability joint strategic needs assessment identified that although Thurrock continues to be slightly more affordable than its surrounding neighbouring areas, it is still much less affordable than many other areas in the country. It has also become increasingly more unaffordable over the past five years compared to other local areas. Those in the lower income quartiles are worst affected.

Affordability concerns are also prevalent for those wanting to buy in Thurrock. The chart below indicates the percentage of the first-time buyer and existing owner-occupier households in the

borough that would be priced out of the market, based on 4x household incomes, local property prices and national loan-to-value statistics.

Property Purchase Unaffordability by Property Type/Buyer Type



This means that there is likely to be a considerable number of households for whom home ownership is not an option, in turn increasing the number of households looking to privately rent or socially rent. There is a need to ensure that these options are available and affordable for these households. There is also a need to ensure that these options are of suitable quality and security to mitigate against potential poor health effects of unhealthy housing.

The table below provides a snapshot of average weekly rental values and measures in Thurrock based on tenure type.

Number of Bedrooms	Local Housing Allowance Rate	Social Rent (Council)	Affordable Rent (Council)	30th Percentile Market Rent	80% Median Market Rent	Median Market Rent
1	£161	£77	£130	£172	£146	£183
2	£201	£85	£153	£219	£185	£231
3	£247	£105	£199	£289	£244	£305
4	£307	£118	-	£365	£313	£392

- LHA Rate – Local Housing Allowance, the maximum amount of Housing Benefit or the housing costs element of Universal Credit that eligible residents can claim. This has been frozen since April 2020.
- Social Rent – the average social rent charged (excluding service charges) for properties owned by the council

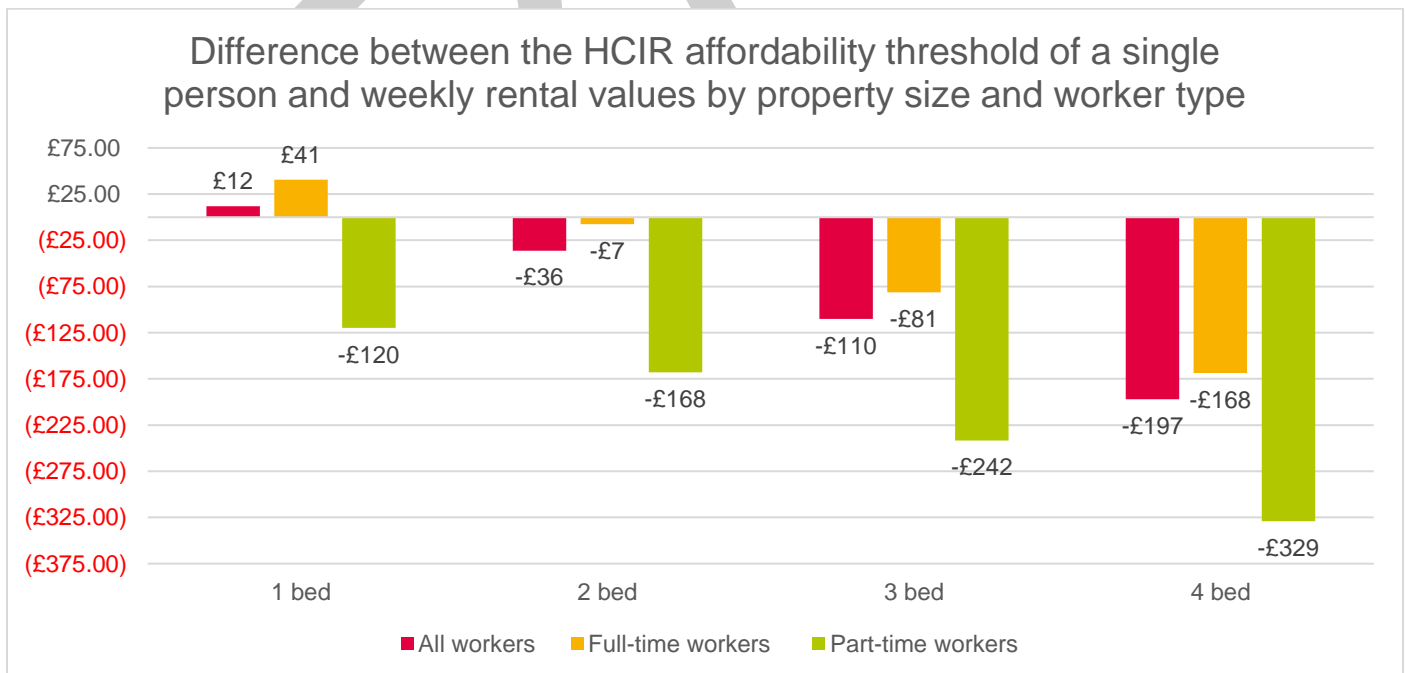
- Affordable rent – the average affordable rent charged (excluding service charges) for properties owned by the council.
- 30th Percentile – 30% of private market rents fall below this value, and this measure was used as the benchmark to set the LHA rate in April 2020. Whilst LHA rates have been frozen since this time, market rents have continued to increase
- 80% Median – 80% of the value of the average market rent, used for calculating ‘affordable rent’ in line with the Government definition
- Market Rent – indicates the value in the middle of the range of private market rents.

There is then the challenge of households living in properties that may be deemed affordable, but that comes at the cost of quality, standard of living and decency of accommodation.

The table below provides details of median earnings for Thurrock residents alongside an affordability threshold calculated using the HCIR model.

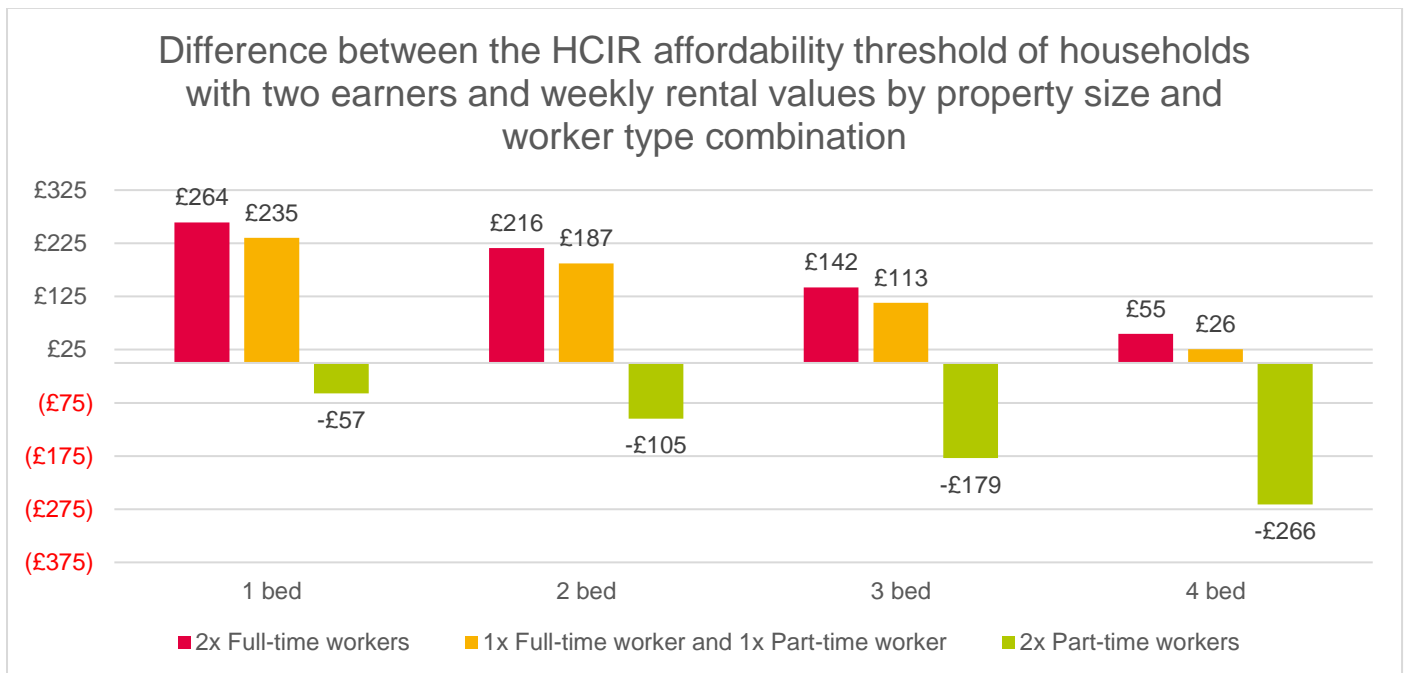
	Median Weekly Earnings	Affordability threshold (HCIR)
All Workers	£584.50	£194.83
Full-time Worker	£670.60	£223.53
Part-time Worker	£189.30	£63.10

The following chart compares median weekly earnings for a single person to median weekly market rents by property size. It evidences the difference between the affordability threshold of a single person and rental values in Thurrock. Negative figures represent the amount by which weekly rental values exceed HCIR affordability thresholds, effectively indicating unaffordability.



Single full-time workers appear to be more likely to find one-bedroom properties affordable within the private rental sector; however, for other property sizes, and for other worker types across property sizes affordability is significantly impacted.

Finally, the below chart provides an indication of possible household combinations based on worker types compared to median weekly market rents, showing the difference between the household affordability threshold and rental values. As with the above chart, negative figures represent the amount by which weekly rental values exceed HCIR affordability thresholds.



The above chart illustrates that households with two earners where at least one is a full-time worker will find the private rental market more affordable with an affordability buffer of between £26 and £264 per week depending on property size. For households with no full-time earners, accessing properties with median market rents is extremely unaffordable, with rental values exceeding affordability thresholds by £57 to £266 per week, depending on property size.

Impact

Housing can have positive and negative impacts on health that may be direct and indirect. Good quality homes, that are suitable for the needs of the people living in them offer a strong base from which people can study, work, raise a family and enjoy life in as they grow into their later years.

Those experiencing challenges with affordability in Thurrock will often find that the properties within their budget will be of poorer quality, will be less secure and will be less suitable housing for residents. These residents therefore experience an unequal distribution of housing related health risks.

A poor-quality home, for example one that is damp, mouldy, and cold, can exacerbate physical health problems, negatively impact mental health and may impact on the residents' ability to study, work and otherwise use and enjoy their home.

Due to current house prices and household incomes in Thurrock, data indicates that homeownership is unaffordable for almost half of all first-time buyers looking to purchase flats or maisonettes in the borough. As property sizes increase, so too does the proportion of first-time buyers and existing owner-occupiers that would find purchasing unaffordable.

The impact of current rental levels compared to earnings means that, for many, this is not an affordable option either. Although a single full-time worker earning the median weekly pay would

find themselves approximately £41 within the HCIR affordability threshold for a one-bedroom property based on median market rents, a full-time worker receiving a weekly pay at the 30th percentile would have a buffer of less than £2 per week.

Households on the lowest incomes in Thurrock who need to rent privately are at highest risk of tenancy insecurity due to unaffordability, often requiring financial assistance such as Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. Rising rental value levels mean that there are shortfalls between maximum LHA rates and private market rents across Thurrock. The table below indicates the discrepancies that residents eligible to receive the maximum amount of Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit would face in relation to 30th percentile and median market rents.

	30 th Percentile Market Rents – Weekly Shortfall	Median Market Rents – Weekly Shortfall	30 th Percentile Market Rents – Annual Shortfall	Median Market Rents – Annual Shortfall
1 bed	-£11	-£22	-£572	-£1,144
2 bed	-£18	-£30	-£936	-£1,560
3 bed	-£42	-£58	-£2,184	-£3,016
4 bed	-£58	-£85	-£3,016	-£4,420

The table above shows the growing shortfall between rising market rents and maximum LHA rates. In a little under two years since LHA rates were realigned with the cheapest third of private rental sector properties, the discrepancy has grown to between £572 and £3,016 per year, and between £1,144 and £4,420 when LHA rates are compared to median market rents.

For households reliant on the housing element of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit for their housing costs, if these are insufficient to meet the actual rental costs of their property, they have little option but to use benefits provided for non-housing expenditure to meet the shortfall. This challenge of private sector affordability directly relates to the ever-increasing demand for accommodation at social and affordable rents.

There is also a challenge with relying on HCIR as a model to determine affordability, as it only considers the cost of rent or mortgage. It has no capacity to reflect the cost of living in Thurrock, the costs of energy and other utilities, nor the varied levels of earnings and income in the borough. Whilst it does provide an indication of sorts, it underestimates the scale of the affordability challenge. Resident and stakeholder feedback stressed the need to develop some other measure by which affordability can be expressed and defined, specifically for Thurrock.

Recent action

The council has introduced approximately 200 homes into its housing stock since the start of the 2020/21 financial year, comprising a mixture of new build properties and acquisitions from the housing market. Every one of these properties are offered at weekly rental levels within the LHA rates applicable in Thurrock, making these properties the most affordable homes for rent in the borough.

This is the case across the approximately 9,900 homes in the council's housing stock, all of which are offered at social and affordable rent levels.

The council has committed that it will continue to deliver new homes through both estate regeneration and smaller scale development within affordable rent levels, continuing to ensure affordable housing is available to those most in need in Thurrock. Further details regarding these developments can be found within later sections of this chapter.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will introduce and maintain a 'Thurrock Affordability Standard' in order to accurately inform service delivery, policy design and housing development</p>	<p>We will use the Affordability JSNA to understand drivers of unaffordability in Thurrock along with data and resident feedback relating to the cost of living in the borough to establish an affordability standard that is realistic for Thurrock households</p> <p>We will identify gaps in service provision, for example by using the affordability standard in comparison with financial eligibility criteria in the Housing Allocations Policy, and revise these so they remain fit for purpose and offer routes to housing to those in need</p> <p>We will keep this standard under regular review to reflect the ever-changing landscape in the borough</p>	<p>Residents receiving support relating to housing will have their affordability measured against this standard to ensure routes into housing are identified and proposed that meet locally assessed affordability levels rather than generic calculations</p>
<p>We will deliver at least 500 new council-owned affordable homes by 2027</p>	<p>We will provide at least 500 new homes at rent levels that are within those set by the Thurrock Affordability Standard (when established) and Local Housing Allowance rates</p> <p>We will assess affordability on a development-by-development basis alongside household costs and incomes in Thurrock at that time in order to ensure that rents can be offered at appropriate levels</p> <p>We will always assess the viability for any new development against Local Housing Allowance rates and the Thurrock Affordability Standard (when established)</p>	<p>Residents will have access to good quality new build homes in council-led developments that are within realistic affordability levels for Thurrock households</p>
<p>We will maximise the delivery of genuinely affordable housing in new developments in order to boost access and availability</p>	<p>We will use development management, the Housing Strategy, and the Local Plan as vehicles for delivering a minimum provision of 35% of the total number of residential units built to be affordable housing</p> <p>We will embed the Thurrock Affordability Standard in assessments of local housing need</p>	<p>Residents will have greater opportunities to access affordable housing across the borough, allowing them to live in areas of their preference</p>

What?	How?	Impact?
We will support households to maximise their income in order to increase the range of affordable housing options	<p>We will build meaningful and lasting partnerships with the community and voluntary sector in order to allow residents to be better supported through knowledge and information sharing, timely and appropriate signposting and access to training and employment opportunities</p> <p>We will continue to provide financial inclusion support for Thurrock residents</p>	Residents experiencing difficulties in accessing or sustaining homes due to financial pressures will have improved affordability and can more easily find or maintain settled accommodation
We will establish a social lettings agency for Thurrock in order to expand private housing options for residents	We will engage with and support private sector landlords to increase the supply of affordable and good quality private rental sector properties, and explore opportunities for direct property acquisition	Residents will have greater choice and availability within the private rental sector for good quality homes offered at affordable levels in Thurrock

Prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping in Thurrock

Context

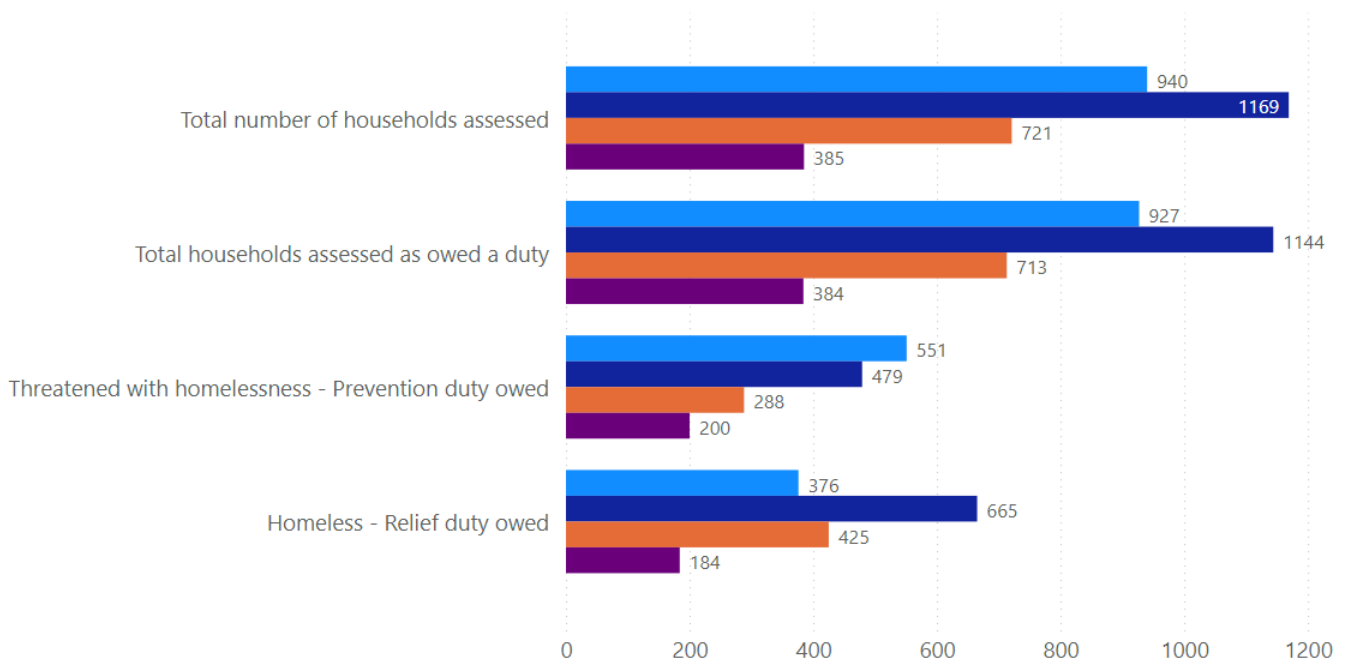
Homelessness is a complex societal issue. The impact on the lives of individuals and households, and the response required from public and third sector organisations is significant.

Homelessness detrimentally effects the physical and mental health and wellbeing of individuals, impacts their access to health and care services, is a factor in increased drug and alcohol misuse, and disrupts the work, education, and support networks of households.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 saw the council experience an increase in the number of households approaching the organisation for assistance regarding homelessness. The chart below indicates the number of households that approached the council for assessments since the start of the 2018/19 reporting year. All figures for 2021/22 are based on the latest available statutory returns (April 2021-September 2021).

Homeless Approaches (2018/19 to 2021/22)

● 2018/19 ● 2019/20 ● 2020/21 ● 2021/22



The initial assessment identifies if the council has a statutory homeless duty to the household that submitted the application. A household may be owed the prevention duty if the household is eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness, in which case the local authority must take reasonable steps to help the household to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for their occupation.

Alternatively, a household may be owed the relief duty if the household is experiencing homelessness and is eligible for assistance. In this case, the local authority must take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure that accommodation becomes available for at least six months.

A reduction in assessments can be observed after the end of the 2019/20 reporting year can be directly and primarily attributed to the impact of measures implemented by the Government to support people to remain in secure and settled accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures included the extension of eviction notice periods, which returned to pre-pandemic lengths in October 2021, and the prevention of bailiff enforced evictions that was lifted in May 2021.

In 2018/19 and 2019/20, households approaching the council for a homelessness assessment were more likely to be owed the prevention duty as they were threatened with homelessness, rather than the prevention duty that would have been owed if they were experiencing homelessness.

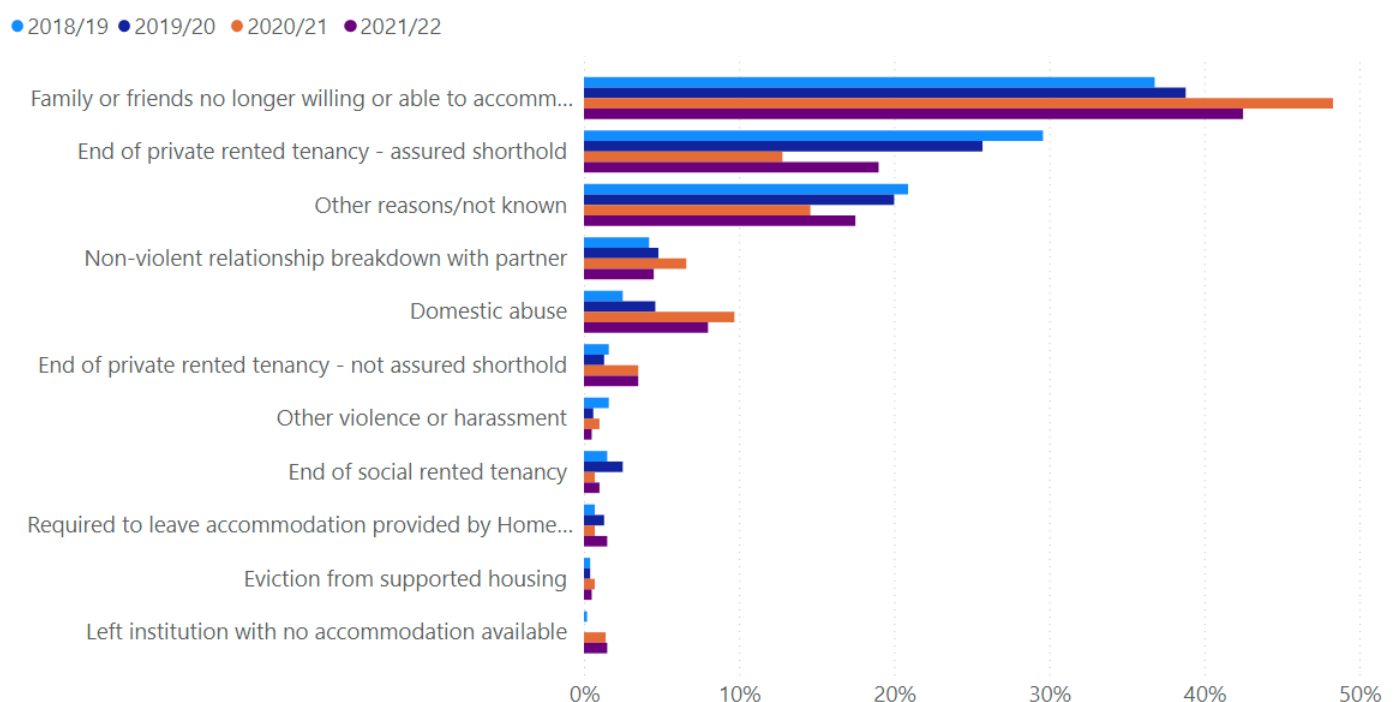
In 2020/21 this balance reversed, with more households owed the relief duty than the prevention duty. As already outlined, during the COVID-19 pandemic support was in place to keep renters and homeowners in their settled homes, including mortgage payment holidays, leading to fewer households facing homelessness due to the threat of eviction or repossession.

These reasons for homelessness tend to have advanced warning or notice, meaning that action can be taken to sustain tenancies; however, other reasons for the loss of accommodation require swifter support and action.

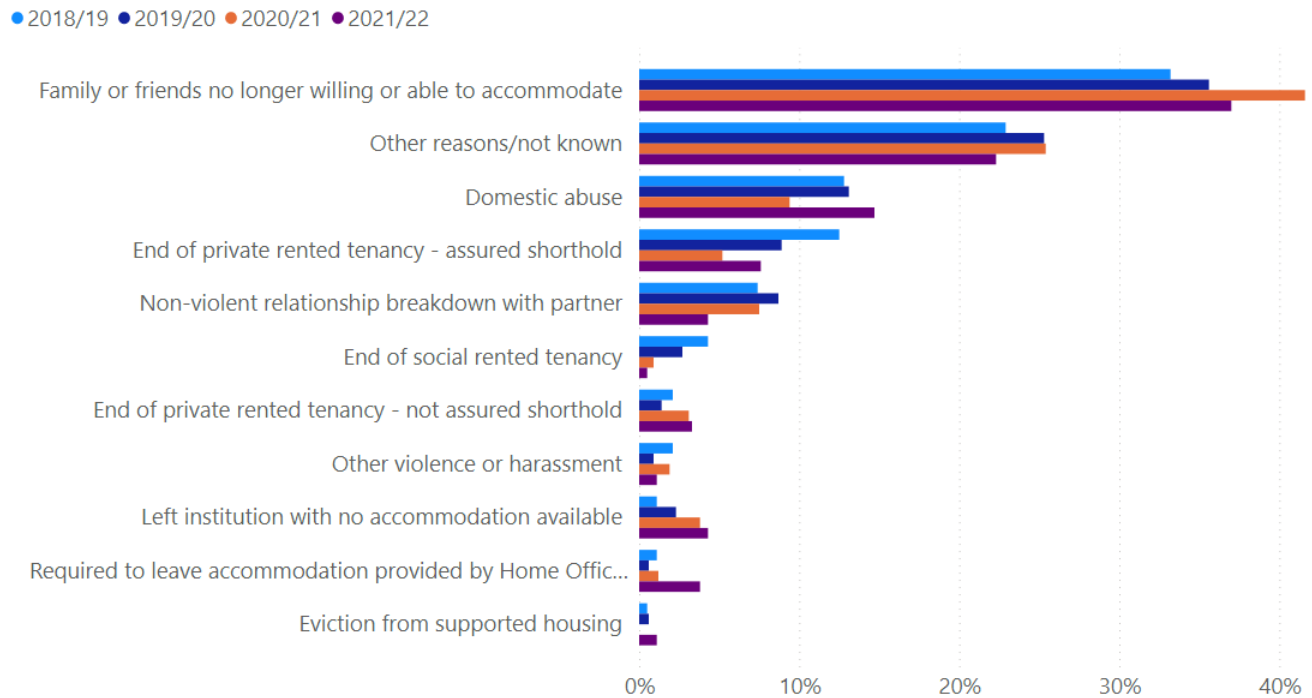
For example, the proportion of applicants that lost their accommodation due to domestic abuse and owed the relief duty is higher than those who would be owed the prevention duty.

The tables below present further information regarding the reasons for the loss of settled accommodation, split by the households owed the prevention duty and households owed the relief duty. Within the tables, the classification *other reasons/not known* includes fire/flood/other emergency, left HM forces, mortgage repossession, property disrepair, other or unknown reasons for the loss of settled accommodation.

Reason For Loss Of Last Settled Homes For Households Owed A Prevention Duty



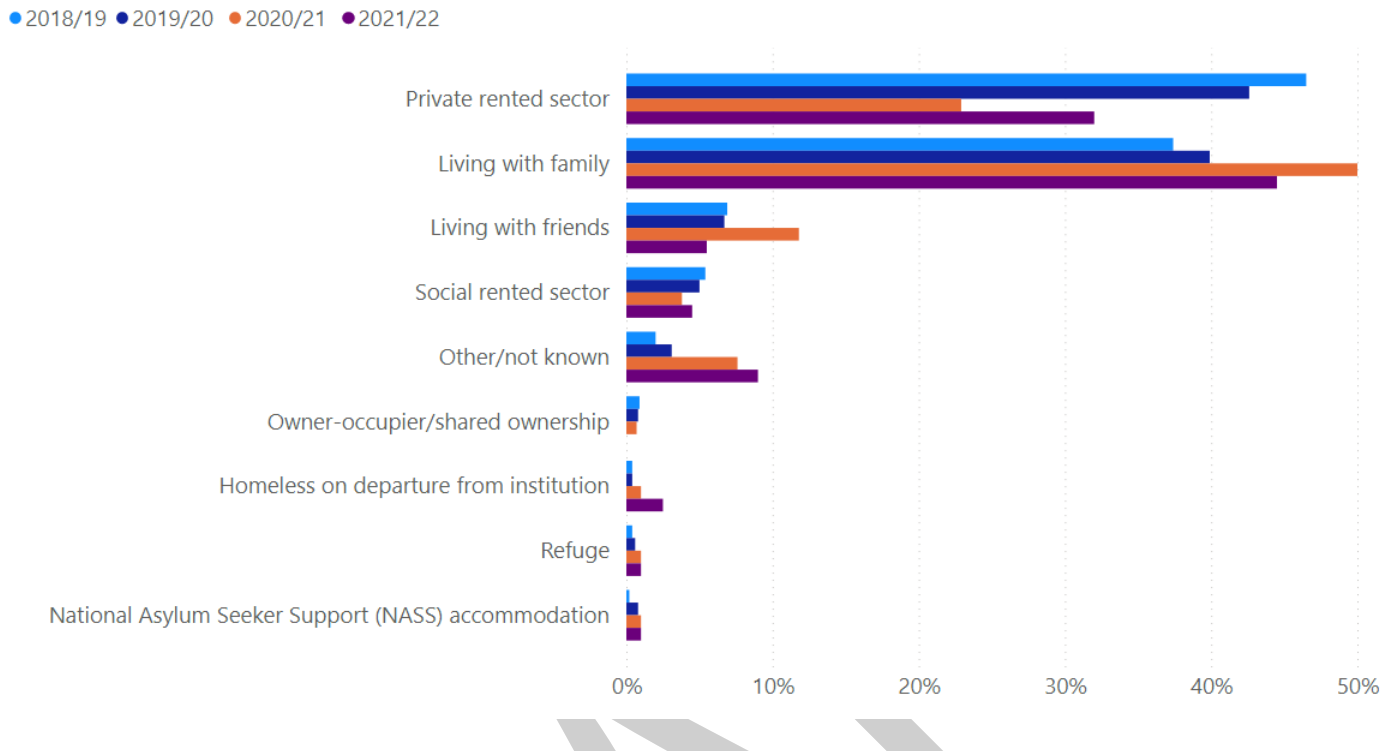
Reason For Loss Of Last Settled Homes For Households Owed A Relief Duty



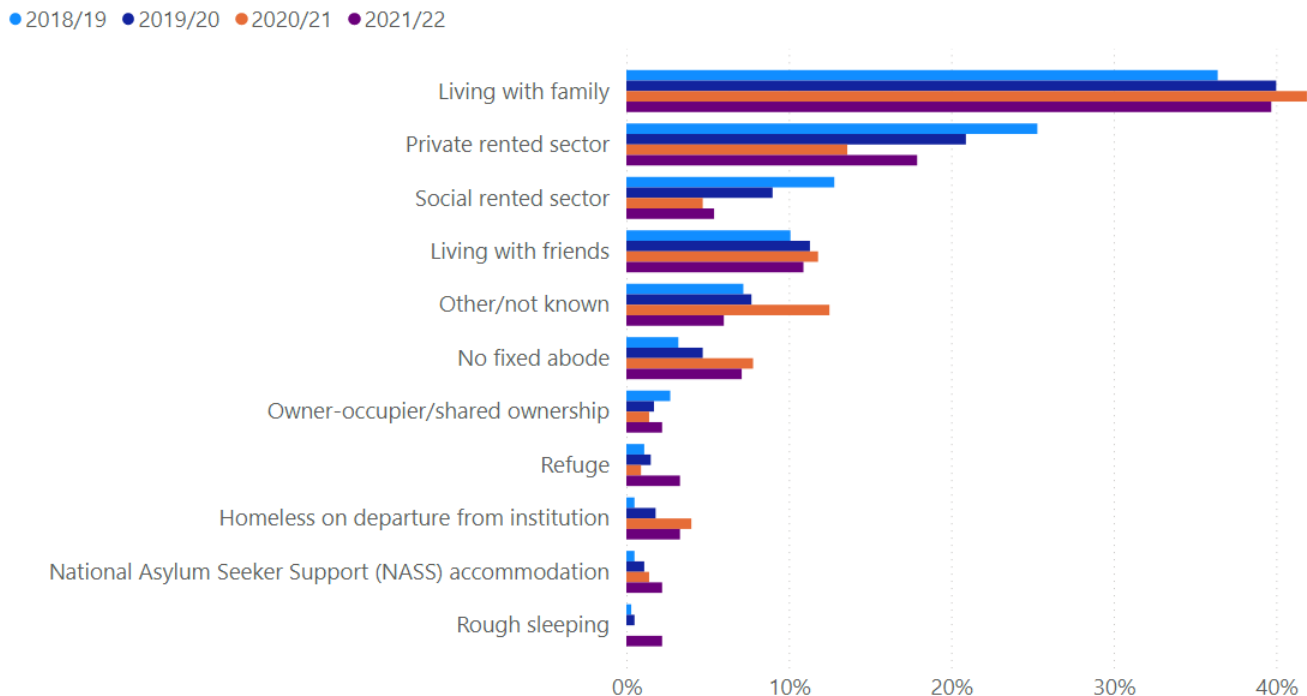
Both charts demonstrate the sharp reduction after March 2020 in the proportion of households owed prevention or relief duties due to the end of a private rental sector tenancy. Family and friends no longer willing or able to accommodate remained the most prevalent reason for the actual or threat of loss of settled accommodation in Thurrock, with the proportion increasing noticeably in the 2020/21 financial year.

The charts below present data regarding the type of accommodation at the point that a homelessness application was submitted, again split by those owed the prevention duty and those owed the relief duty. Other/not known includes caravan/houseboat, student accommodation, looked after children placement, tied accommodation, Armed Forces accommodation, other and unknown types of accommodation.

Accommodation At Time Of Application For Those Owed A Prevention Duty



Accommodation At Time Of Application For Those Owed A Relief Duty



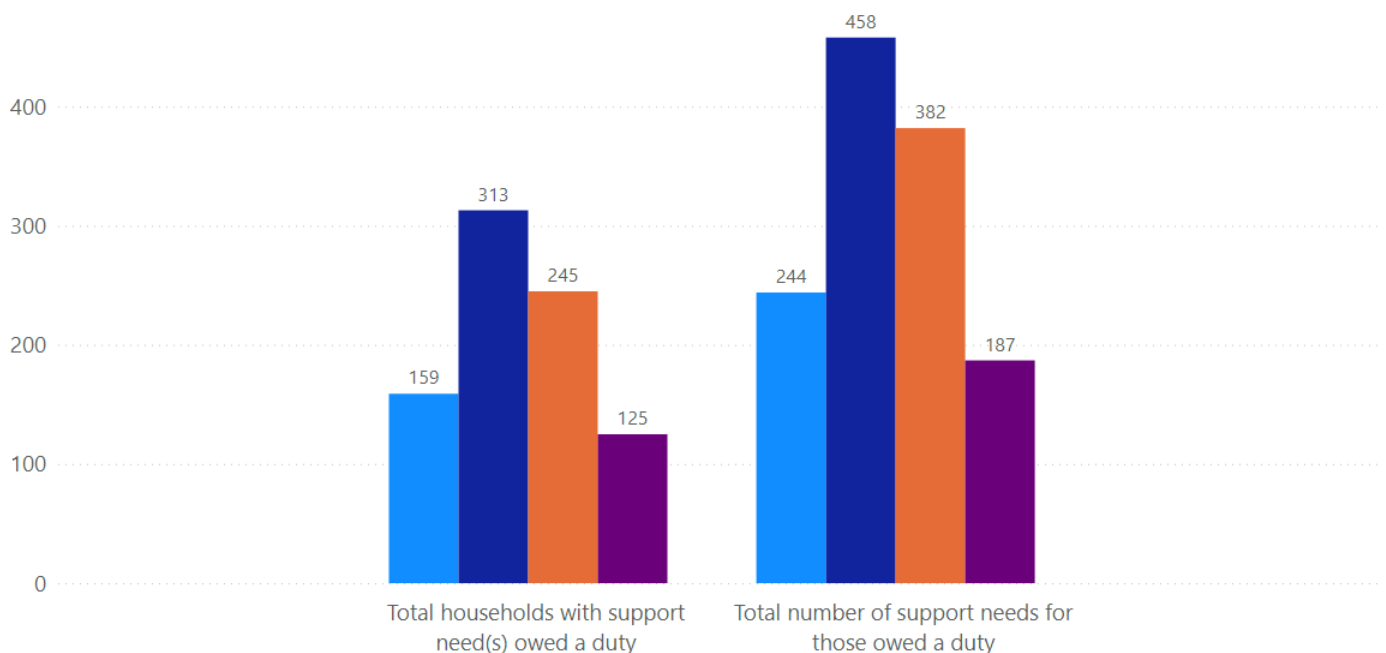
Again correlating with the protections for private rental sector tenants, a reduction in the proportion of the loss of private rental sector accommodation can be seen from 2020/21 compared to previous years. Over the past two years, the largest proportion of those owed the prevention and relief duties were those living with family.

When considering the types of households experiencing or threatened with homelessness in Thurrock, the proportion of single adult males and single adult females seeking assistance have generally increased over the past four years, and with single adult males accounting for more than two in every five household types owed the relief duty.

When submitting and progressing through a homelessness application, household support needs are identified. The proportion of households with support needs owed either the prevention or relief duties has generally been increasing over the past four years.

Households With Support Needs Owed a Duty

● 2018/19 ● 2019/20 ● 2020/21 ● 2021/22



The most prevalent support need for applicants in Thurrock has consistently been where there has been a history of mental health problems within the household, followed by those with physical ill health and disability and those at risk of or have experienced domestic abuse.

The council's Veteran's Charter recognises that those who have served in the armed forces may experience issues in accessing and securing accommodation. Although the above chart presents a comparatively low number of applicants approaching the council for assistance that had served in the armed forces, there should be proactive identification of veterans approaching the council's homelessness service to ensure that specialised advice and information is offered to support former armed forces members to secure safe and suitable accommodation.

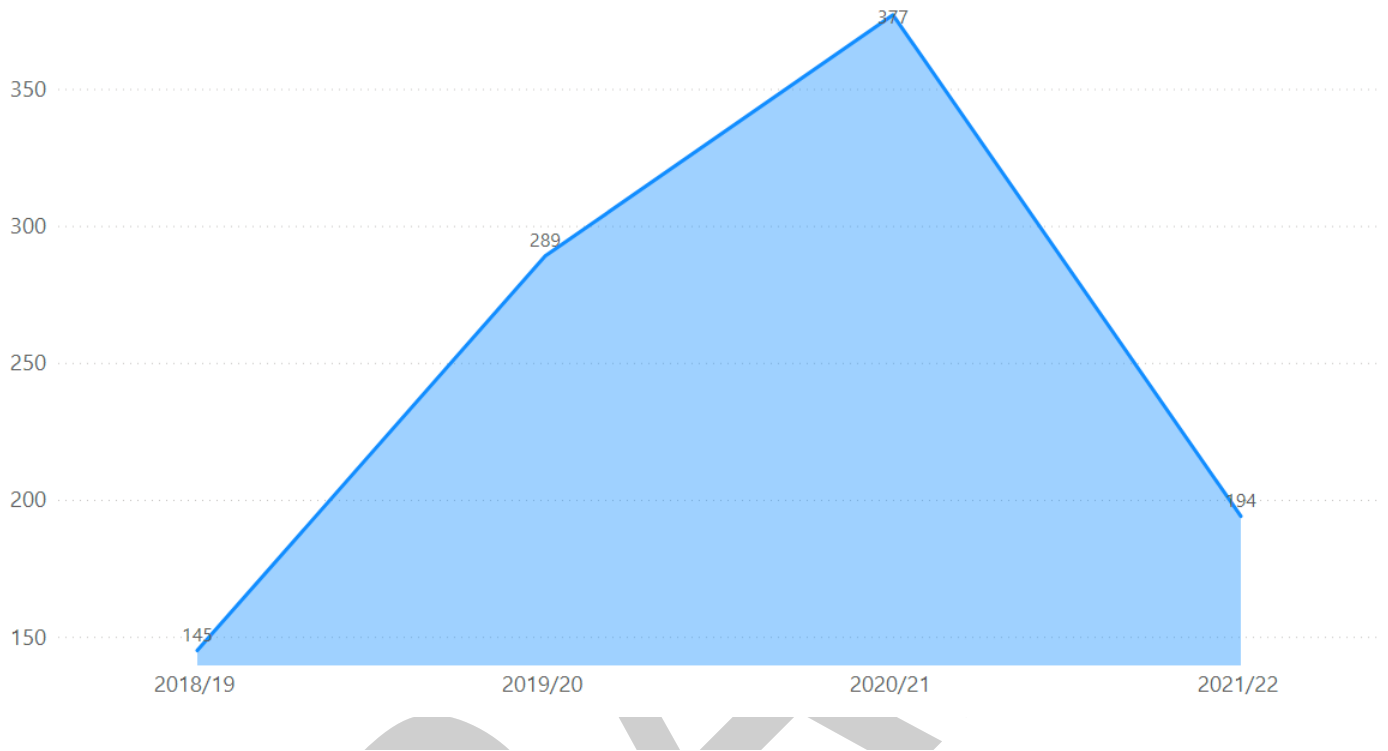
In general, where homelessness can be prevented or relieved, the most prevalent type of accommodation offered is in the private rental sector, and this has been the case for a number of years.

Action the local authority can take to prevent or relieve homelessness include helping households to secure accommodation found by the applicants (with and without financial payment), directly securing accommodation through the housing options services, negotiation, advocacy and mediation, and other financial payments, such as those to reduce arrears.

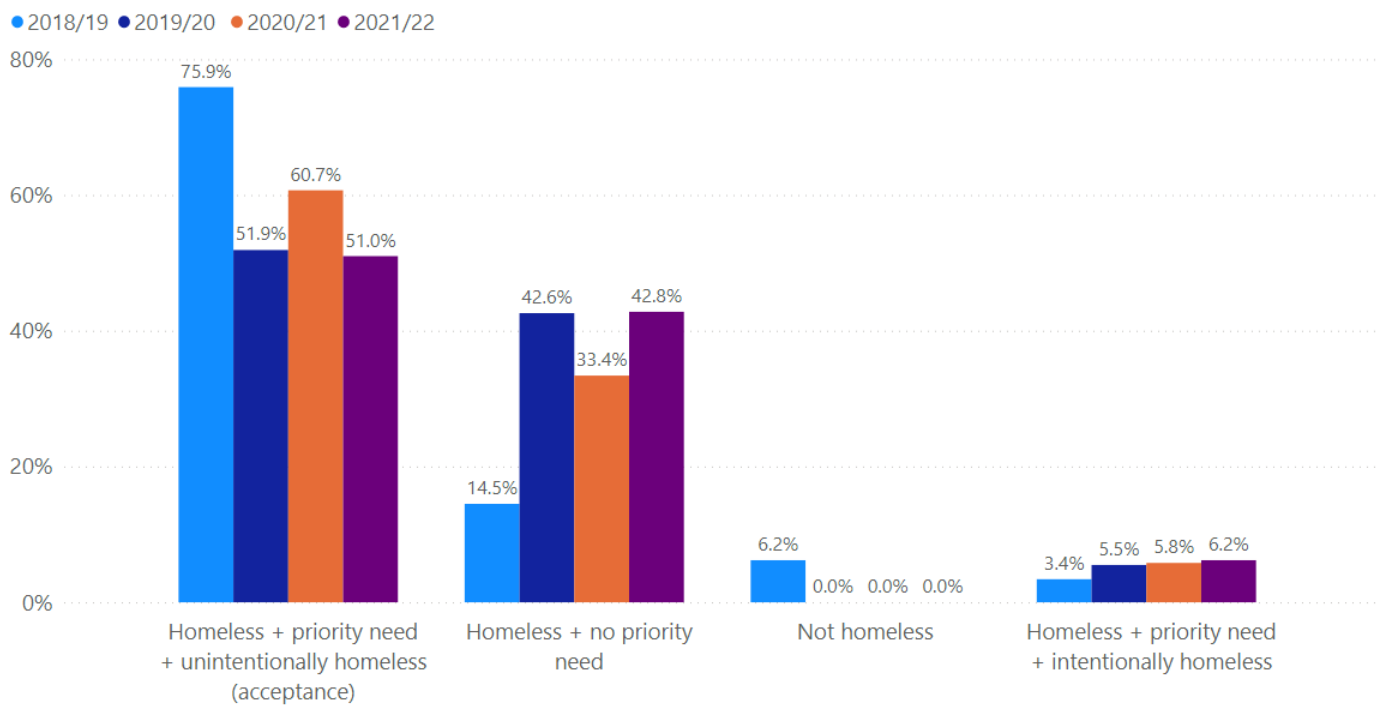
If accommodation cannot be sustained through the prevention duty or assistance to secure accommodation is not successful during through the relief duty, a further assessment is

undertaken to understand if the household is owed the main housing duty. The main housing duty owed by a local authority to someone who is homeless, eligible, has a priority need and is not intentionally homeless.

Main Duty Decisions by Year



Outcome Of Main Duty Decision For Eligible Households

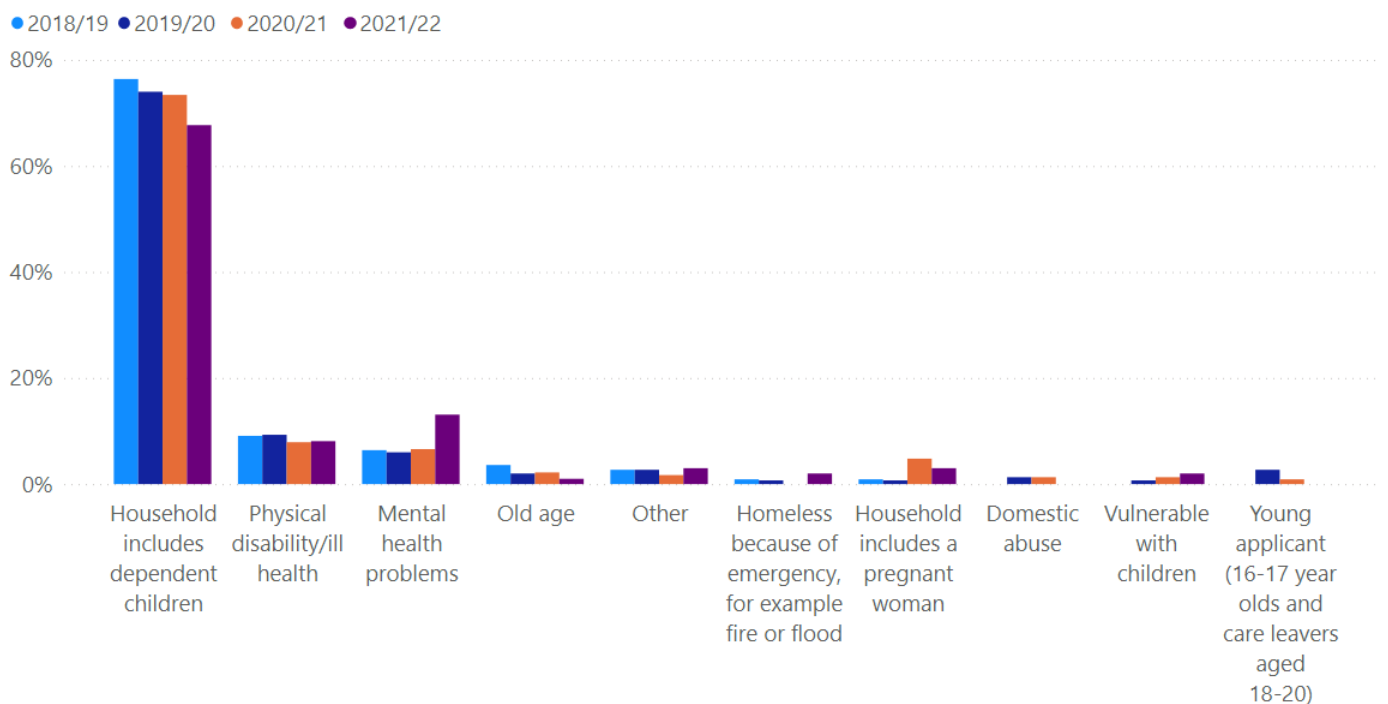


A number of factors are considered to determine whether a homeless household has a priority need for housing. Some groups of people, such as pregnant women, households with dependent children and victims of domestic abuse must be accepted as in priority need.

Others, such as those with physical disabilities or mental health illnesses and disabilities may also be in priority need if they would be significantly more vulnerable than an ordinary person would be if they became homeless.

The chart below provides an indicator of the priority need of households owed the main housing duty by Thurrock Council. The table, the classification ‘other’ incorporates alcohol/drug dependency, learning difficulty, time spent in care, in custody, in HM forces or as former asylum seeker, and those fleeing home because of violence other than domestic abuse.

Priority Need Of Households Owed A Main Duty



Although the proportion of households with dependent children within all those owed a main duty has seen a slight year-on-year reduction, it remains the most significant priority need in homeless households Thurrock. There has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of households identified in priority need of housing as a result of mental health problems, with physical disability and ill health remaining a consistent factor for priority need.

Unlike accommodation secured through the prevention and relief duties, most of the accommodation offered to households owed the main housing duty was social housing, however the use of private rental sector properties has been increasing in recent years.

Impact

It is generally recognised that prevention is more effective and less costly than responding to crisis, and with homelessness this is no different. If the balance of homelessness assessments continued as evidenced in 2020/21 with the number of relief duty cases outweighing prevention duty, it would mean that there would be increased pressures on the resources and finances of

public services, and far greater numbers of Thurrock residents experiencing the distress and harms of homelessness.

A focus on proactive identification of households in Thurrock at risk of or threatened with homelessness provides far better opportunities to support and prevent reaching the point of loss of their settled accommodation.

The data indicates a range of diverse support needs in the households that approach the council for homelessness assistance in Thurrock. To appropriately prevent or relieve homelessness, sufficient levels of suitable accommodation are required in Thurrock, however previous sections of this chapter have illustrated the undersupply of new homes in recent years, exacerbating pressures on existing properties.

The above data indicates that there are greater opportunities to prevent and relieve homelessness by accessing properties in the private rental sector, however if homelessness cannot be relieved that the vast majority of households identified to be in priority need are made offers of social housing.

Again, the information in this chapter evidences a chronic shortage of affordable social housing in Thurrock. Without appropriate homes for people to move to there is a risk that vulnerabilities can be exacerbated, stays in temporary accommodation extend and alternative locations are considered, and households experiencing homelessness will be pushed further into crisis.

The information on assessments shared above indicates that rather than there being an overall downward trend and reduction of households experiencing homelessness, it suggests that certain causes of homelessness were suppressed in recent years. Caution remains regarding the possibility of an increase in households seeking homelessness advice and assistance because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which would place additional pressures on the Housing Solutions service, social housing stock and the private rental sector in Thurrock.

With rising inflation, stretched household budgets and a potential backlog of possession proceedings to progress through the courts that were held up during 2020 and 2021, it is highly likely that there will be a surge in Thurrock households experiencing financial hardship and at risk of homelessness in the months and years ahead.

To minimise the risk of harm that homelessness can cause to individuals, the consequences of COVID-19 must be kept under close review throughout the lifetime of this strategy until evidence suggests that the risk has been successfully mitigated or addressed appropriately.

Recent action

Although the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 generally directed local housing authorities to place much greater focus on homelessness prevention through general service provision, Thurrock Council's housing service has taken significant action to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.

A number of roles have been created and exist in the service to target specific areas of challenge or priority regarding homelessness, with some funded in part or full from DLUHC grants. These roles include:

- rough sleeper coordinator, whose close links to the community, voluntary and faith sector facilitates not only the identification of those experiencing rough sleepers but also those who may be at risk reaching crisis and losing their homes
- landlord and tenant liaison officer, exclusively tasked with preventing tenancy breakdown, negotiating with landlords and preventing illegal evictions
- tenancy sustainment officer, working with the rough sleeping cohort
- private lettings officer, specialising in supporting those with a history of rough sleeping, working and negotiating with landlords to secure accommodation and overcoming barriers such as guarantors and references
- financial inclusion officer, supporting residents to maximise their incomes, claim applicable benefits, establish budgets and payment plans, and prioritise debts appropriately
- mental health senior practitioner, seconded from adults social care into the housing solutions team to undertake assessments and assist households in identifying and accessing support to meet their needs

The ongoing temporary accommodation transformation plan has delivered successful outcomes to date, reducing the number of households in emergency and temporary accommodation significantly below pre-pandemic levels.

The council has access to a funding pot which can be used flexibly to help prevent homelessness, supporting in particular those unlikely to be in priority need. An allocation of £50,000 was also awarded to the council by the European Social Fund to set up and manage an ex-offenders housing and employment project in Tilbury.

There are also a number of cross-service initiatives that aim to support households at risk of or experiencing homelessness. An arrears panel has been established focussing on council tenants at risk of eviction. The panel features wide representation from across the council with a sole focus on the prevention of tenancy breakdown, with opportunity for interdepartmental working to tackle issues and avoid homelessness.

Briefings and training sessions have been delivered by housing solutions staff to colleagues in adults social care and children's services around the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the council's allocations policy, expectations and rights relating to homelessness and early warning indicators of homelessness that staff can look out for and refer accordingly for appropriate intervention. There are aims to deliver these sessions to other frontline and resident facing staff across the organisation.

Multi-disciplinary groups have been established to review case studies from the different perspectives of partners in the wider system, developing a shared understanding of existing challenges and aiming to identify areas of good practice and where improvement can be made to reach positive outcomes for households in the future.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will effectively eliminate rough sleeping in Thurrock	We will provide appropriate and timely support for people experiencing rough sleeping by making an offer of accommodation to every verified rough sleeper, and sharing knowledge between partners to help identify those individuals	Residents experiencing rough sleeping face some of the most severe health inequalities and report much poorer health than the general population, and those who experience rough sleeping over an extended period are, on average, more likely to die young Proactive work to tackle rough sleeping will significantly reduce the likelihood of people experiencing these severe health inequalities
We will support residents experiencing hardship across all tenures in order to prevent homelessness and sustain their homes	We will identify people at risk of homelessness early, preventing homelessness by adopting a holistic approach across the wider system where concerns and early indicators can be referred to the housing service for action We will monitor and review the impact and consequences of COVID-19 on the security of tenure for Thurrock households	Residents at risk of losing their homes will be proactively supported to avoid crisis and prevent the experience and harms of homelessness
We will work in partnership across the system in order to improve access to health, care and support services for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness	We will establish an initiative to bring together community and voluntary sector organisations, health partners and other support services in a physical location to directly support those who are at risk of or who are experiencing homelessness We will co-design bespoke solutions with each resident to address all the factors that may be contributing to their homelessness or risk of homelessness, such as addiction, mental health and debt	Residents at risk of or experiencing homelessness would receive meaningful, personal and better target support which is specific to their circumstances with the aim of securing appropriate settled accommodation
We will ensure that any households requiring temporary accommodation remain within the borough wherever possible and for as little time as possible	We will increase and maintain the number of council-owned properties for use as temporary accommodation in the borough, and only look to make out-of-borough placements where it is for safety reasons or in the best interests of the household by purchasing or leasing up to 115 properties by 2023, prioritised for those at risk of homelessness	Residents requiring temporary accommodation placements will experience significantly less disruption through the use of in-borough council-owned by ensuring that they are provided with better quality homes and remain close to any places of work or education and existing support networks This approach will also reduce the financial pressures associated with costly nightly-let style temporary accommodation

Deliver sustainable estate regeneration

Context

Estate regeneration provides the opportunity to enhance estates, address issues of health inequalities and deprivation whilst increasing the provision of housing on site. The council has identified key areas requiring significant investment that would benefit from wider regeneration to deliver new and better-quality housing.

Council investments in existing housing stock need to be continually reviewed to ensure that programmes achieve the best outcomes for residents and maximise the overall value of assets. The aim is to ensure future reinvestment in properties that are well located, meet housing needs and are efficient to manage.

Investments also need to be made to ensure that homes and neighbourhoods support the health and wellbeing of residents in the local area.

Much of the council's existing housing stock is considered maintainable in the long-term; however, the council recognises that some property archetypes present challenges in ongoing maintenance and the living environment due to their age or build type.

For such properties, it may be that an alternative use could be more appropriate. Alternative uses may include using the land or housing assets to build additional homes to increase the number of council-owned and managed dwellings available, of the type and quality needed and in areas where people want to live.

Further practical options could include:

- Re-designation or re-use of properties
- Remodelling of properties
- Infill development or full site redevelopment
- Development on previously undeveloped or cleared land

Several potential locations have already been identified to be taken forward for housing redevelopment and regeneration, such as the Blackshots high-rise tower blocks, blocks of flats at Teviot Avenue, and part of the Civic Offices site in Grays.

The high-rise blocks at Blackshots experience problems with damp and mould and attract the most with complaints about this issue across all high-rise blocks in Thurrock. There are interim plans to address some immediate issues at the Blackshots blocks in respect of the existing external cladding system, the ventilation of the communal areas and weatherproofing of the structure; however, this will not address the overall design and layout of these properties which does not meet the requirements of today's modern living. For example, the kitchens cannot accommodate all modern-day appliances, and there is no separate clothes drying space within the blocks.

Teviot Avenue, Aveley, contains 36 flats constructed of pre-cast reinforced concrete of the 'Cornish' type. These dwellings were of a type designated as defective initially under the 1984 Housing Defects Act, consolidated into the 1985 Housing Act, due to their construction material and manufacture.

A refurbishment was scheduled for Teviot Avenue in the next 5 to 10 years, so a survey was instructed to assess the condition of the structures and record the location of defects, and also to provide commentary on the remedial works and improvements required to maintain the blocks in the medium term.

However, the survey identified several issues with the flats at Teviot Avenue, including inherent structural defects due to the construction method. These defects can only be remediated by substantial reconfiguration of the overall structure. Therefore, the reconsideration of options was required for the estate and long-term sustainability.

After the completion of a stock options appraisal and initial engagement with residents, the preferred option to be progressed is to redevelop the site and provide more homes.

The position on redeveloping Civic Offices 1 (CO1) for residential accommodation and the benefits of providing a new council facility in the Civic Office extension were agreed at Cabinet in September 2019, with the benefits of developing CO1 for residential accommodation being a contributory factor in bringing the Civic Offices Project forward.

An initial range of designs and cost plans were developed that considered options from refurbishing the existing accommodation as apartments through to a range of demolition and new build alternatives of differing levels of height and density. Following review, the preferred option was for a new build project of approximately 80 homes.

Options for a market sale or private rented sector development proved not to be financially viable, however a scheme based on 100% council-owned social housing has been proposed and offers a financially sustainable model for developing the site.

Through extensive resident engagement, stock evaluations and options appraisals, it is anticipated that further regeneration possibilities will arise throughout the lifetime of this strategy.

Impact

Redevelopment and regeneration of housing and estates has short- and longer-term impacts and consequences. In the short term, to allow for major works to take place in existing residential areas, households living in properties identified for regeneration will need to be supported to move into alternative temporary or permanent accommodation elsewhere in the borough.

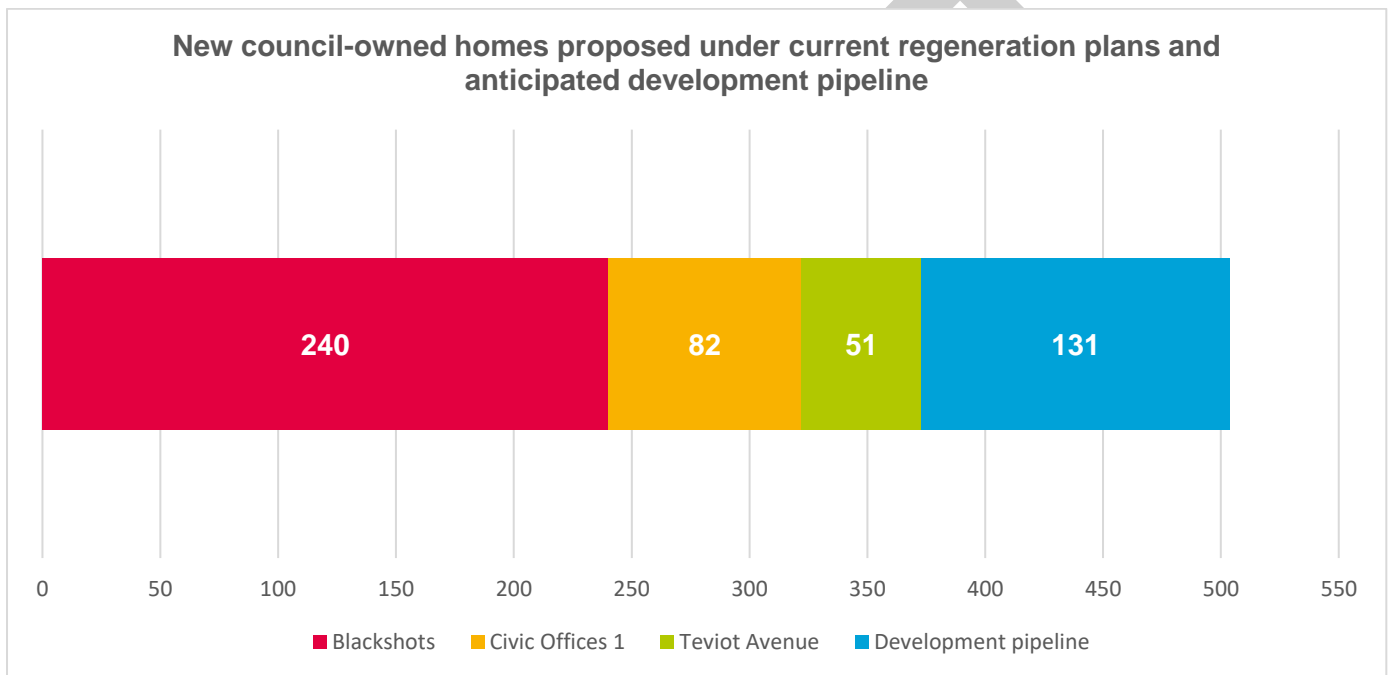
In both Blackshots and Teviot Avenue proposals, remediation works would prove costly and only extend the life of accommodation that had already been identified as falling short of meeting the needs and expectations of tenants and modern day living. In the longer term, the proposals to redevelop these sites (and others in the future) will deliver new homes and neighbourhoods meeting higher quality standards, with modern technology built-in to maximise thermal and energy efficiency.

These outcomes will directly benefit the residents that will live in these homes in the future, improving general health and wellbeing and reducing the risk of experiencing fuel poverty. Regeneration will also offer the opportunity to embed active travel, reduce dependency on car use and improve cycling infrastructure in new developments across Thurrock, improving health and wellbeing outcomes.

Recent action

The most significant regeneration project in Thurrock currently underway is the investment in over 140 acres at Purfleet-on-Thames, delivering up to 2,850 new homes. Purfleet Centre Regeneration Limited is a joint venture between Urban Catalyst and Swan Housing, in partnership with Thurrock Council. The first phase of 61 homes is currently anticipated to be handed over in Spring 2023.

Specific projects have commenced to take forward regeneration opportunities for council-owned homes at Blackshots, Teviot Avenue and Civic Offices 1. Initial resident engagement activity has already been completed with households at Blackshots and Teviot Avenue, with very high proportions in favour of redevelopment.



Although the schemes are still in early stages, the chart above provides an indication of the number of properties that each project is currently anticipated to be able to deliver.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will establish and embed a clear vision and deliver against ambitious plans in order to direct future housing development and regeneration	<p>We will deliver a Housing Development Strategy to regenerate and improve council estates</p> <p>We will undertake options appraisals for wider estate regeneration to establish proposals to improve the quality of homes and neighbourhoods for residents</p>	Residents will benefit from well designed homes and estates as a direct result of council-led development that improve the local area and renew existing poorer quality housing

What?	How?	Impact?
We will deliver the major regeneration projects at Blackshots, CO1 and Teviot Avenue to provide modern, sustainable homes that are fit for the future	We will progress and deliver the regeneration of Blackshots, Civic Offices 1 and Teviot Avenue, delivering up to 373 new homes	Residents in Blackshots and Teviot Avenue will be supported to move into good quality homes that eliminate the current issues experienced in those locations, with new housing opportunities for residents across the borough at CO1
We will embed resident engagement in estate regeneration in order to deliver projects that meet local needs	We will work closely with our residents to understand their priorities, identify required estate improvements, and progress opportunities for new housing to transform and enhance neighbourhoods	Residents will have direct input, influence and opportunity to shape future council-owned developments and ensure that they meet their needs and priorities
We will target the regeneration approach in order to maximise the value of housing assets	<p>We will undertake full stock appraisals of assets where property archetypes continue to present challenges due to age or build type or where land redevelopment could offer opportunities to improve stock and provide better value for money</p> <p>We will ensure these appraisals consider, need and demand, and social, economic and neighbourhood sustainability factors</p> <p>We will use these appraisals to inform and recommend future programmes of investment or redevelopment to address identified issues</p>	Residents will be assured that new developments offer value for money, are financially viable and can be delivered
We will embed active travel in new developments in order to encourage sustainable transport and improve wellbeing	<p>We will encourage a shift away from traffic growth in new developments and regeneration projects and help connect more residents to key services and facilities and to open space and nature</p> <p>We will embed cycling infrastructure into new developments</p>	Residents will benefit from better connected homes and neighbourhoods that do not rely on private car use for access or transport

Review the model of Sheltered Housing provision

Context

Housing providers throughout the country have recognised that the traditional approach to Sheltered Housing model may no longer be fit for purpose or match the lifestyles and aspirations of older people today. Sheltered housing stock and complexes can also appear dated.

The consequences of these factors combined leads to lower levels of demand, increased numbers of vacant properties, loss of rental income for housing providers as well as missed council tax revenue.

This challenge has been known and growing for some time nationally, with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation publishing housing research in December 1995 regarding the causes and consequences of difficulties letting sheltered housing properties.

The table below shows a snapshot of voids and lettings performance for council-owned sheltered housing properties in Thurrock since 2018/19.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Current Void
Number of properties let in financial year (or currently void)	109	96	118	102	18
Number of properties advertised more than 4 times	4	1	23	26	6
Number of properties advertised more than 12 times	0	0	6	10	1
Number of properties advertised more than 20 times	0	0	0	5	0
Average number of bidding cycles per property	1.7	1.1	3.3	4.6	4.1
Average number of calendar days void	47.8	34.1	73.3	56.4	64.9

Thurrock Council operates a choice-based lettings system, whereby housing register applicants can place up to two bids each week on a list of advertised properties that meet their household needs each week. These are known as bidding cycles.

The above table shows that the average number of calendar days that a sheltered property is vacant has increased since the end of 2019/20. The increase in 2020/21 can be explained in part because of steps taken to suspend all choice-based lettings from 23 March 2020 until 11 June 2021 in response to the Government's 'Stay at Home' guidance. Allocations were still made for risk-assessed homeless households and applicants whose safety was at risk where they live, such as those experiencing domestic abuse.

The table also indicates that since 2020/21 there has been a significant increase in the average number of bidding cycles required for a successful offer of a sheltered housing property to be made to an applicant. Sometimes properties need to be readvertised if the shortlisted candidates refuse the property or withdraw from the allocation process, however sometimes the readvertisement is due to a lack of interest from applicants in that bidding cycle.

The increase in number of void days for 2020/21 cannot be explained by the choice-based lettings suspension entirely, however, as the average number of bidding cycles per property also increased which suggests that the extended void periods were more likely a result of the lack of interest from an appropriate housing register applicant. This trend appears to have continued into 2021/22, for properties that have been let as well as those that are currently void.

To better understand the drivers for increased void turnaround times and increased numbers of bidding cycles, lettings data can be broken down into property types. The table below is combined data for the period between 2018/19 and 2021/22.

Property Type	Number of properties let	Average number of bidding cycles per property	Average number of calendar days void
1 bed ground floor flat	205	1.2	41.4
1 bed first floor flat	189	4.6	68.1
1 bed second floor flat	7	3.3	100.0
1 bed third floor flat	3	1.0	42.0
1 bed bungalow	19	1.2	29.8
2 bed bungalow	2	1.0	66.5

The above table provides a clearer picture of applicant demand based on property types. In the reporting period, the number of 1 bed ground floor flats and 1 bed first floor flats are broadly similar. However, the successful letting of a 1 bed first floor flat takes almost four times as many bidding cycles than needed for a 1 bed ground floor flat and void periods are on average 64.5% longer. 1 bed second floor flats, whilst requiring fewer bidding cycles than 1 bed first floor flats, experience the longest void periods.

The relative difficulty in letting properties above the ground floor in sheltered housing may reflect concerns or preferences regarding accessibility of such properties for residents that meet the criteria for sheltered housing in Thurrock – a factor exacerbated by the fact that very few council-owned sheltered housing complexes with more than one floor have lifts.

Impact

Difficulties in letting properties, regardless of property type, impacts both the council and housing register applicants. The longer that a property remains vacant the greater the amount of lost revenue that could have otherwise been reinvested back into housing services, however it also means that the property is sitting vacant rather than providing a safe, suitable, and affordable home for a household in need.

If sheltered housing properties are not meeting the needs of eligible housing register applicants or existing residents, action must be taken. A human-centred approach can be explored to broaden the range of households eligible to move into sheltered housing, such as where an individual is below the current age threshold, but the sheltered housing environment would positively affect their quality of life. This type of approach can help to achieve aspirations of intergenerational living, but lettings must be made sensitively.

There is likely to continue to be a need for supported and specialist housing for older people in Thurrock, however significant consideration is needed to ensure that any new developments avoid the pitfalls of existing complexes with regards to accessibility.

Recent action

During the past two years, the Sheltered Housing team have continued to deliver a valuable service to all tenants. The service has been enhanced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic by ensuring tenants had a contact at least twice weekly and supporting residents with food shopping and medication delivery.

The 'Oomph' wellness programme has been reinstated tenant attendance has been strong. The aim of Oomph is to provide fun activity and exercise sessions to benefit physical and mental wellbeing and reduce loneliness.

Several actions have been taken within the service to address underperformance in void turnaround, specifically regarding properties above the ground floor. A dedicated Sheltered Housing Officer has been assigned to this area to improve performance and is currently:

- proactively contacting tenants to support them to move from larger properties
- part of the decommissioning working group, supporting tenants to move and targeting harder to let properties
- working with the Allocations Team to identify suitable tenants and prioritise offers

Case Study - Alexandra Court Decommissioning

Residents are being supported to live independently in Sheltered Housing properties for longer and later in life. Whilst this is positive, as people age and their mobility reduces, they may face additional challenges due to the condition of the communal access points for their homes, subsequently impacting upon their quality of life and independence.

A 2019 report considered the condition of communal entrance points in the Sheltered Housing complexes across the council's housing stock.

This review included the 36 properties at Alexandra Road and the four properties at Dunlop Road, which collectively form the 'Alexandra Court' Sheltered Housing complex in the Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park ward.

The assessment of the access to the blocks at the Alexandra Court Sheltered Housing complex indicated that they did not meet the accessibility standards which the council aims to achieve.

Due to the scale of the suggested works for the Alexandra Court blocks to meet these standards, the disruption residents would face, the challenging space constraints at the site and the internal accessibility issues that would remain, such as stairs-only access to the first-floor flats, it was decided to decommission this complex in late 2020.

Whilst this decision posed a level of disruption to residents, a comprehensive package of support was designed to help them to move to alternative accommodation suitable for their needs. This included two dedicated officers assisting with key elements of moving home, such as:

- packing and removals
- assisting with the home loss and disturbance payments

- general moving requirements
- providing a smooth transition from one property to another

The nearby construction of Beaconsfield Place, a council-owned development using HAPPI principles for older people's housing, provided an opportunity for residents to move to a new home within their current community designed with accessibility requirements in mind. The development has 31 one-bedroom flats and 4 two-bedroom duplex flats, indoors communal spaces, private communal gardens for residents, ample parking and mobility scooter storage. The support of a sheltered housing officer will be provided at this new development.

Tenants from Alexandra Court were prioritised for the Beaconsfield Place development, if they wished to move there, and all residents were awarded the highest priority on the council's housing register to allow them to consider moving to another Sheltered Housing complex or appropriate property elsewhere in Tilbury or across Thurrock.

15 households were successfully supported to move into other sheltered housing complexes of their choice across Thurrock. A further 18 households from Alexandra Court moved to Beaconsfield Place following its handover into the council's housing stock in February 2022.

In the longer term, decommissioning this complex will allow the entire site to be considered as a redevelopment opportunity to provide new council-owned family-sized homes for the borough.

The Sheltered Housing Team is working with other services across the council to identify suitable applicants, making person-centred decisions relating to the age eligibility where a move to sheltered housing would have a beneficial impact on the health and wellbeing of a household.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will implement a new delivery model for Sheltered Housing in order to ensure this type of supported provision meets resident needs	We will explore options for changes and improvements with residents to provide a new delivery model for Sheltered Housing, including opportunities to include the delivery of an outreach independent living service	Residents requiring this type of supported living will be able to access a service that is person-centric, appropriate for their needs and reflects modern living
We will rationalise Sheltered Housing stock in order to identify opportunities to provide new housing	We will investigate options for the potential decommissioning of Sheltered Housing complexes which are underused or no longer fit for purpose and offer opportunities to redevelop into new housing	Residents in homes where accessibility is a challenge will be supported to move to accommodation that is better suited for their needs Residents will have access to newly developed homes that meet varied needs in existing and well-connected communities
We will overhaul the approach to allocating Sheltered Housing properties in order to support more people to benefit from this type of accommodation	We will reassess the eligibility criteria for Sheltered Housing within the Allocations Policy and introduce a new approach to 'sensitive lettings' to improve access for residents	Residents that may benefit from the environment and style of living offered in sheltered housing complexes will be offered the opportunity to do so under a redeveloped lettings approach

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will invest in Sheltered Housing complexes in order to improve the day-to-day experience of residents</p>	<p>We will develop new ways and opportunities for residents in Sheltered Housing to engage and collaborate with the housing team, other council services and external partners by increasing the use of technology in complexes</p> <p>We will invest in Sheltered Housing stock to improve conditions through internal and external decorating programmes</p> <p>We will continue the work to improve resident access to communal spaces in line with Equalities Act</p>	<p>Residents living in sheltered housing complexes will be better connected to their neighbours and local area, reducing accessibility difficulties and tackling causes of social isolation</p>

Chapter 6

Protect Resident Safety

This chapter is focused on protecting people and working to prevent them from experiencing harm to their physical and mental health. It considers the physical environment relating to property conditions, fuel poverty, property accessibility and adaptations, and harm experienced from anti-social behaviour, crime, and domestic abuse. It also addresses and the general perception or feeling of safety in and around the home and neighbourhood.

The safety and security of residents in Thurrock are of paramount importance. They can be considered in two ways – the actions taken or required to protect physical safety and the actions taken or required to support people to feel safe. Although these are often aligned, it cannot be guaranteed that ensuring physical safety will result in a person feeling safe, and vice versa.

Improve warmth, safety, and standards in private sector homes

Context

All residents living in the borough must have access to good quality housing.

A significant amount of feedback was provided by residents during the development of this strategy relating to standards in the private sector. Responses suggested that action was required to ensure that all HMOs and other privately rented properties in Thurrock operate appropriately and safely, and to support vulnerable homeowners to live in warm and safe homes.

Private sector conditions

In 2021 the council commissioned a study to gather intelligence on the private housing stock in the borough. Through this, the council gained insight on the tenures, property conditions, likely instances of fuel poverty and geographical distribution of properties.

In recent years, Thurrock has seen growth in the number of properties used in the private rental sector, both as dwellings let in their entirety and as houses of multiple occupation (HMOs). The private rented sector, including HMOs, have an important role as housing provision in Thurrock. The 2021 study estimated that the size of the private rental sector in Thurrock had increased by 76.3% compared to the findings of the 2011 census.

The council uses a risk-based evaluation tool called the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to help identify potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. The HHSRS is used to determine whether residential premises are safe to live in, or whether a hazard exists that may cause harm to the health and safety of a potential occupant.

The system assesses 29 types of housing hazard and provides a rating for each one. Those which score highly on the scale are called category 1 hazards and the council has a duty to take the appropriate enforcement action. Those that fall lower down the scale and pose a lesser risk are called category 2 hazards.

Physiological requirements

- Hygrothermal Conditions – damp and mould growth, excess cold and excess heat
- Pollutants (non-microbial) – Asbestos, biocides, carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products, lead, radiation, uncombusted fuel gas, and volatile organic compounds

Protection against accidents

- Falls – falls associated with baths etc, falling on level surfaces etc, falling on stairs etc, and falling between levels
- Electric shocks, fires, burns and scalds – electrical hazards, fire, and flames, hot surfaces etc
- Collisions, cuts and strains – collision and entrapment, explosions, position and operation of amenities etc, and structural collapse and falling elements

Psychological requirements

- Space, security, light and noise – crowding and space, entry by intruders, lighting, and noise

Protection against infection

- Hygiene, sanitation, and water supply – domestic hygiene, pets and refuse, food safety, personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage, and water supply

The data provided in the private sector stock condition survey estimated that 11% of properties in the private sector are estimated to have at least one category 1 hazard. The table below provides a breakdown by private sector tenure type as well as an indication of the proportion of properties in disrepair. In this table, disrepair is based on the former Decent Homes Standard criteria which states that a dwelling fails this if it is not in a reasonable state of repair – this is based on the dwelling age and condition of a range of building components including walls, roofs, windows, doors, electrics and heating system

		Owner-occupied properties (% of total)	Private rental sector properties (% of total)
HHSRS category 1 hazards	At least one hazard	10.7%	10.6%
	Excess cold	1.6%	1.7%
	Fall hazards	8.5%	7.5%
Disrepair		3.0%	4.1%
Fuel Poverty (Low-income, high costs)		8.8%	16.8%
Low-income households		12.1%	29.5%

The private sector stock condition survey estimated that highest concentration of all HHSRS hazards is found in the wards of Grays Thurrock, Little Thurrock Rectory, and East Tilbury, with the highest concentration of properties experiencing excess cold located in East Tilbury, Orsett and Grays Thurrock.

The above table also provides an estimate of the number of properties experiencing fuel poverty, using a measure that considers a household to be in fuel poverty if their required fuel costs are above average, or spending that amount would leave the household with a residual income below the official poverty line (considered in this data to be 60% of the median UK household income, after housing costs).

The wards of Tilbury St Chads, Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park, and Belhus featured the highest concentrations of households of fuel poverty in Thurrock.

Fuel poverty is driven by three main factors: low household incomes, high energy costs, and poor property energy efficiency such as insufficient insulation or ineffective heating systems.

Since 1 April 2020, landlords have no longer been able to let or continue to let properties covered by the Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Regulations if the property has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating below E, without a valid exemption in place. Band ratings are divided into bands A to G, with the band A representing the highest level of energy efficiency.

Through the stock condition survey 2.9% of privately owned dwellings and 2.9% of private rented dwellings in Thurrock were estimated to have an EPC rating below band E.

Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

HMOs can present greater risks to the health, safety, and wellbeing of residents than comparable single occupancy homes. Risks such as dangerous gas appliances, faulty electrical systems and inadequate means of escape and other fire precautions are examples of some of the hazards that the private housing team investigate in Thurrock on a regular basis.

We estimate that there are 2501 HMOs in Thurrock. Grays Riverside ward has the highest number of HMOs, followed by West Thurrock & South Stifford, and Grays Thurrock.

The below table presents estimates of the stock condition survey, comparing the risks and hazards of non-HMO rental sector properties to HMO private rental sector properties.

		Non-HMO private rental sector properties (% of total)	HMO private rental sector properties (% of total)
HHSRS category 1 hazards	At least one hazard	10.4%	11.9%
	Excess cold	1.7%	2.1%
	Fall hazards	7.4%	8.4%
Disrepair		3.9%	5.3%
Fuel Poverty (Low-income, high costs)		17.6%	12.9%
Low-income households		29.2%	30.7%

Through the stock condition survey, we estimate that at least one category one hazard is present in 26% of HMOs in Grays Thurrock, 23% of HMOs in The Homesteads and 22% of HMOs in Little Thurrock Rectory. 12% of HMOs in Grays Thurrock are also estimated to be in disrepair

The purpose of licensing, especially for HMOs, is to ensure that residential accommodation within the private rented sector is safe, well managed and of good quality with a particular focus on safety.

A licence is needed for all properties that are occupied by five or more people, living together as two or more households. There are additional licensing rules for HMOs in certain areas in Thurrock until May 2024.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Mandatory disabled facilities grants (DFGs) are available from local authorities to fund or part-fund the completion of a range of adaptations for disabled occupants. DFGs are issued for works that are necessary and appropriate for the property to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and that are reasonable and practicable to carry out. DFGs are tenure neutral.

Purposes for DFGs include works to facilitate access to and from the dwelling and any garden space, and access to or the provision of specific areas of a dwelling, such as the principal family room, a bedroom, appropriate personal hygiene facilities, and an appropriate space for food preparation and cooking. In addition, DFGs must be approved for works to make the dwelling safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with them.

The most prevalent harms removed in Thurrock properties between April 2019 and March 2021 as a result of disabled facilities grants were relating to personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage, falls with baths, and falls on stairs.

Impact

Property standards, regardless of tenure, affect the health and wellbeing of residents. The Marmot Review, published in 2010, concluded that housing is a 'social determinant of health', affecting and impacting upon physical and mental health inequalities throughout life.

Poor quality, sub-standard and unsafe private sector homes in Thurrock, whether owner-occupied or privately rented, are more likely to lead to injury and illness for residents than homes that are well-maintained and hazard free.

One in every ten private rental sector properties and just under one in every eight HMOs in Thurrock are estimated to have at least one category 1 HHSRS hazard, defined as hazards posing serious and immediate risks to the health and safety of residents.

The negative outcomes associated with such properties affect the quality of life of residents, place additional pressures on health and care services, and may lead to housing instability and insecurity for households seeking safer accommodation in the borough.

Although enforcement powers and measures are available to the council to use to tackle hazards in private properties, taking such action is largely reactive and only implemented following a report from an affected resident. In the private rental sector, tenants may be less likely to report any concerns to the council formally in fear of retaliatory eviction by their landlord. Except for HMOs under the mandatory and additional licensing schemes in Thurrock, there is no enforced structure for the proactive inspection of properties intended to be offered for rent. This means that hazards may exist in a property and remain unreported for some time, increasing the risk of harm for any resident living in that home.

These consequences are also applicable to households experiencing fuel poverty. Cold homes are associated with a range of poor health outcomes, including an increased risk of developing and exacerbating physical health conditions and mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.

Home adaptations, supported by the effective and timely administration of DFGs in Thurrock, provide many benefits for individuals with disabilities. Changes to an individual's home can bring about significant enhancements to independence as well as overall health and wellbeing. Adaptations can also reduce the risks associated with a poorly accessible home, such as the risk of falls, hospital admissions, thereby reduce the need for the reliance on carers, or other informal and formal support such as residential care.

An accessible and well-adapted home can enable an adult or child with a disability to remain in their home for longer, with dignity and with pride, and the earlier this is achieved, the sooner the benefits can be realised.

Recent action

As a direct result of interventions by the Private Sector Housing team, 2642 category 1 and 2 hazards were removed from properties in Thurrock between 2018-19 and 2020-21.

The council was also awarded £61k in grants from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to tackle criminal landlords and drive up standards in the private rental sector.

An additional HMO licensing scheme was introduced in 2019 and has seen 213 HMOs licensed to date. Work to explore a selective licensing scheme for the private rental sector has also commenced.

Through proactive and targeted action, civil penalty fines have been used as a method of enforcement action, generating up to £220k for HMO and housing related offences.

Thurrock Council launched its Well Homes scheme in 2014 to improve the housing conditions and the health and well-being of residents living in private properties.

The Well Homes scheme:

- offers help to make homes safer by reducing the risk of ill health or accidents – for example, unsafe stairs or wiring, or providing improvements to your heating system
- puts residents in touch with health and lifestyle services that can improve quality of life – for example, help to stop smoking, health checks, debt advice, housing adaptations

The council secured a Warm Homes Fund grant of £453k for first time central heating systems under the ECO3 scheme and was allocated £1.8m under Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 (LAD2), a Government funded local-authority scheme that makes energy-saving improvements to the homes of people who struggle to pay their heating bills and keep their homes warm in the winter.

Between 2017-18 and 2020-21, the council awarded over £1.9m of Disabled Facilities Grants to 310 applicants to fund essential adaptations to give disabled people better freedom of movement into and around their homes, and to give access to essential facilities within the home.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will drive up the standards and quality of homes in the private sector in order to ensure greater availability of safe and suitable homes for Thurrock residents	<p>We will develop targeted and data-driven interventions and work with private sector landlords to improve housing standards and living conditions for those renting in the private sector</p> <p>We will work with and support vulnerable owner-occupiers to remove HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System) hazards in their homes to support independent living and protect safety</p>	Residents will have greater access to safe private sector homes, as well as to programmes such as Well Homes that have significant benefits to priority groups such as people living with long-term health conditions, physical disabilities and mental health needs.

What?	How?	Impact?
We will tackle hazards in the private rental sector in order to improve resident safety	We will continue to remove significant health and safety hazards from private rental sector properties by using the full extent of enforcement powers available to the council	Residents will be able to live in safe homes in the private rental sector with the confidence that any safety concerns can be raised with the council and appropriate action will be taken
We will encourage private sector residents to access available support in order to live independently in their homes for longer	We will encourage and signpost Disabled Facilities Grant usage where appropriate as a method to removing hazards and improve the health and wellbeing of households in Thurrock	Residents receiving Disabled Facilities Grants, regardless of tenure, will be empowered to live independently in their home by improving accessibility and removing hazards, thereby improving quality of life and reducing the risk of harm
We will develop a strategic approach to reduce fuel poverty in Thurrock in order to address the harm this causes to residents	<p>We will develop a fuel poverty strategy for housing in Thurrock during the lifetime of this Housing Strategy and implement an action plan to address its causes and symptoms</p> <p>We will support improvements to the EPC ratings of private homes across the borough by designing and delivering initiatives targeted at poor energy efficiency</p> <p>We will use technology, data, and predictive analytics to identify and proactively support households at greatest risk of experiencing fuel poverty</p>	Residents will benefit from proactive intervention and access support to improve the thermal and energy efficiency of their homes, removing the harms to health and wellbeing of cold homes and fuel poverty

Invest in and maintain quality council-owned homes that are fit for the future

Context

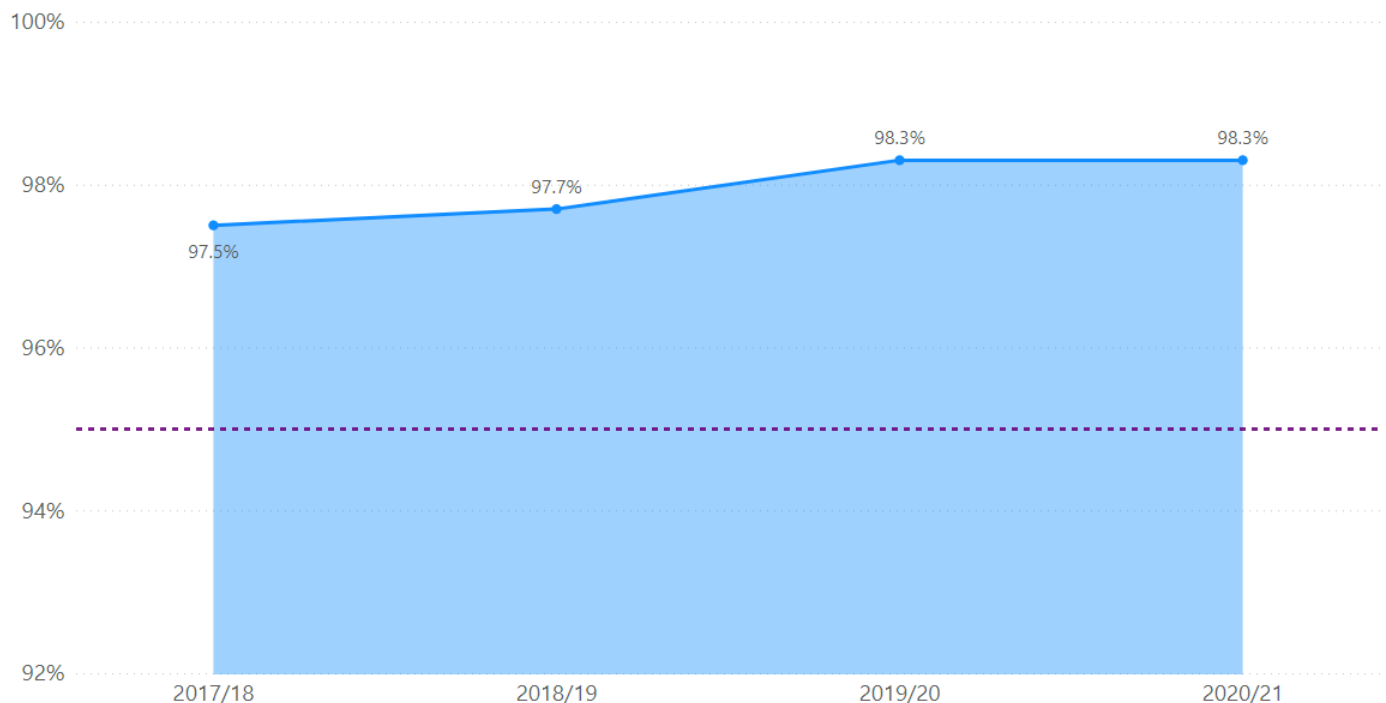
The council's aims for its homes and estates are that they should be places where residents enjoy living and working, where they take pride in their homes and can enjoy being part of a thriving community. The aspiration is to invest in and maintain high-quality accommodation that demonstrates the benefits of the council's repairs and capital investment programmes and positively influences the health and wellbeing of our tenants and residents.

The council owns and manages just under 10,000 homes, with some dating back to the late 19th Century, and its stock includes over 1,000 sheltered housing properties across the borough. Half of the council's general needs properties are three-bedroom homes, and the remaining majority comprise one and two-bedroom flats.

A 2017 stock condition survey demonstrated that the stock was in a fair to good condition with specific themes emerging such a need to prioritise work to property exteriors.

The council provides an effective and responsive day-to-day repairs and maintenance services that keep properties in good repair. The repairs service is delivered through third party contracts, providing a responsive repairs service to all housing tenants in line with government and locally set standards and timeframes. The chart below illustrates the percentage of responsive repairs completed within target timescales since 2017/18, evidencing the consistent strong performance of this area of work.

% Repairs Completed On Time by Year



Building and fire safety are matters of significant importance for any party or organisation involved in the management or maintenance of residential properties, and the responsibilities must not be taken lightly.

To meet its responsibilities, the council has a compliance regime to provide complete assurance to residents that their homes are well managed and meet required safety standards. Specific fire safety policies are in place to set how the housing service will manage and maintain its assets following the regulatory framework.

The housing service has begun to proactively develop an action plan to ensure that the council is in a strong position to meet and address the Social Housing White Paper proposals.

The housing service also stands ready to ensure compliance with the emerging Building Safety Bill, the implementation of recommendations made within the '*Building a Safer Future*' report following the Grenfell Tower fire, and any new duties or responsibilities introduced by the Fire Safety Act 2021. This aligns with the Charter for Social Housing Residents, as set out in the Social Housing White Paper.

Resident engagement is also crucial from the perspective of building management and safety. As part of the '*Building a safer future*' report published following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the introduction of a 'golden thread' was made. This golden thread aims to serve as a tool to manage buildings as holistic systems, allowing people to use information to design, construct and operate their buildings safely and effectively.

Damp and mould

Damp and mould in social housing is an issue across the UK. It is widely recognised as one of the most challenging aspects for landlords and residents to prevent and manage. It is for this reason that the Housing Ombudsman undertook a thematic review and recently published a report on this subject, entitled '*Spotlight on damp and mould – It's not lifestyle*'.

Analysis of council repairs data between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2021 shows that damp and mould repairs are relatively uncommon as a proportion of all repairs. During this time, 2242 responsive damp and mould repairs were completed, representing 4.1% of the total repair demand.

During the reporting period, 2197 damp and mould related works orders were completed at 1,123 council-owned properties, reflecting 11.4% of the council's housing stock.

Further analysis of repairs data demonstrates that tenants of most of these properties only reported damp and mould once during the two-year period, with only 2% of those living in council's housing stock reporting damp and mould concerns more than once during this same period.

There are over five times as many damp and mould works orders completed in January compared to August and damp and mould issues are clearly positively associated with older stock which is less likely to be thermally well insulated. Both findings suggest that the primary cause of damp is condensation, where warm humid air inside the property condenses on cold walls, more commonly occurring in older properties, during the winter months.

The '*Spotlight on damp and mould – It's not lifestyle*' report produced 26 recommendations for landlords, including Thurrock Council to take into consideration for action to improve property conditions. The recommendation asks landlords to shift their approach to damp and mould:

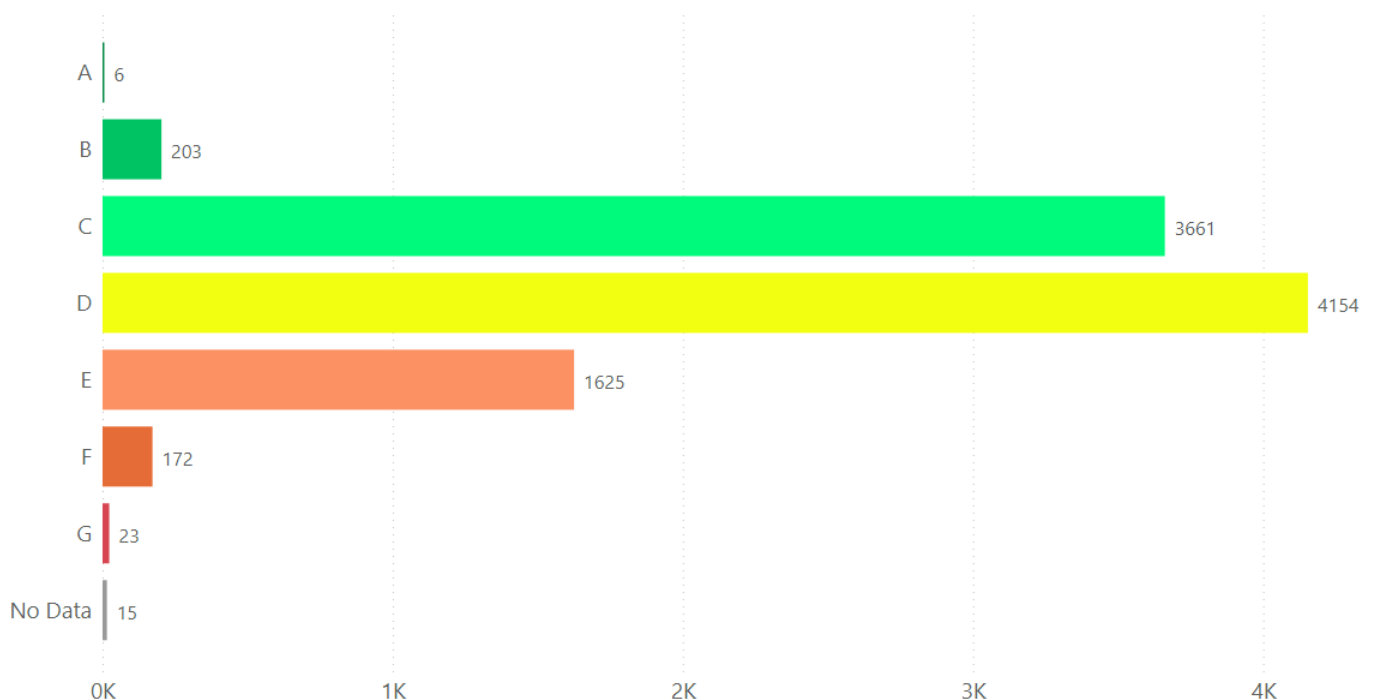
- from reactive to proactive
- from inferring blame to taking responsibility

- from disrepair claims to resolution
- from complaints to a learning culture

Energy efficiency

Energy performance certificates (EPCs) are a rating scheme, summarising the energy efficiency of buildings. Assessed buildings are given ratings between A (very efficient) and G (inefficient). The assessment used to produce an EPC examines key items such as insulation, boilers, hot water tanks, radiators and heating controls, and windows. The below chart demonstrates the EPC ratings of properties within the council's housing stock.

Number of Council Owned Properties by EPC Band



As part of the Government's Clean Growth Strategy, all social housing providers are targeted with ensuring that 100% of homes within their stock have an EPC rating of C by 2030.

Decarbonisation

In October 2019, the council passed a motion to declare a climate emergency and to take urgent action to reduce its carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030. The council has committed to reducing its carbon footprint to zero. The council's initial plans to respond to the climate crisis is by making sure the council's operations are carbon neutral by 2030,

Over 34% of all emissions in the UK are attributed to the provision of heat. Electrification of heat is a key part of the Government's strategy for achieving net-zero carbon by 2050. Ground-source or air source heat pumps provide a solution to fully decarbonise heating in social housing assets coupled with the provision of clean energy. The installation of the low carbon heating systems is expected to provide at least a 70% reduction in carbon emissions.

The council is committed to continually investing to improve the overall thermal efficiency of homes, whilst effectively supporting the borough's most vulnerable residents out of fuel poverty.

This strategy supports the decarbonisation agenda while improving the overall energy efficiency of the assets, ensuring the homes provide affordable thermal comfort.

To achieve this the council will review the performance of the existing housing assets and identify range of appropriate interventions for the various property archetypes within the borough. The council will ensure all retrofit works will be integrated into all asset investment plans, taking a fabric first approach to ensure they achieve the best outcomes value.

Impact

There is a clear requirement for ongoing investment in the council's stock to protect resident safety, provide good quality homes and meet the decarbonisation challenge.

The housing service must set a robust budget in order to meet the ongoing repairs, maintenance and stock improvement obligations. For 2022/23, a repairs and maintenance budget has been set at £12.893m.

The council must be committed to the management and investment required to tackle and minimise cases of damp and mould within residents' homes. It is recognised that it is not possible to fully eradicate the presence of damp and mould due to the array of factors that cause it; however, the council will need to ensure a fully coordinated approach to the ongoing prevention and management of this problem, put in place a policy for this aspect of property management and will work in line with the recommendations set out in the Housing Ombudsman report '*Spotlight on damp and mould – It's not lifestyle*'.

The funding requirements for the five-year capital investment programme between 2022/23 and 2026/27 has been identified as £105.839m. Of this, £51.500m has been identified for the ongoing Transforming Homes programme, £15.200m for decarbonisation of high-rise tower blocks, £8.254m for other carbon reduction works and £3.000m for the renewal of heating systems across the stock.

There will be further significant investment required in order to meet the carbon reduction targets. A report published by Savills in 2021 entitled Decarbonising the Housing Sector estimated average costs of £24,250 per flat and £37,060 per 3-bed houses would be required to meet the requirements. Current estimates based on figures produced for this strategy indicate that around 40% of all homes owned by Thurrock Council currently achieve the Clean Growth Strategy target of EPC band C.

The level of investment required to improve EPC ratings for the remaining proportion of properties by 2030 will far exceed the funds available in the HRA business plan, therefore the council will need to seek to maximise the use of available funding streams. In preparation, the council will develop an opportunity overview of funding streams and ensure schemes are 'bid ready'.

Recent action

Since 2017 capital works totalling over £46m have been undertaken across the council's housing stock to address priorities areas. The Transforming Homes programme, which ensures the council-owned homes meet the required standard, completed internal improvement targets in 2019 and moved on to prioritising the external refurbishment, including the replacement of any remaining single glazing. Between 2019/20 to 2020/21, 732 properties benefitted from external refurbishment and double-glazed window replacement, including street properties and 90 blocks of flats.

A new stock condition survey targeting a further 30% of the stock is being undertaken in the winter months of 2021/22. The aim is to update overall stock condition data rather than diagnose specific repairs and defects, which the council would be made aware of through day-to-day reporting processes. The survey targets the winter months to gain an accurate picture of any properties suffering from seasonal damp or mould problems. The outcome of this survey will further inform the investment programmes over the next 5-30 years.

A pilot was launched to support the safety of vulnerable residents living in the council's high-rise blocks. It introduced personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) that detail the support required for a resident who would be unable to independently leave their property if required in the event of an emergency. The effectiveness of these will be reviewed, and consideration will be given to the broader adoption of these documents across the council's housing stock in advance of any mandatory instruction by the Government.

The council has introduced a proactive approach to identifying properties experiencing damp and mould. Rather than relying solely on residents raising repair requests, new questions have been introduced in the general perception, repairs, gas repairs, gas servicing and new tenancy surveys undertaken on behalf of the council to seek out instances of damp and mould.

Through these questions, residents are asking if they have damp and mould in their property, if they have reported it, and if there is any action required to resolve. If a concern is reported, an alert is sent directly to the repairs quality assurance team, triaged, and sent to repairs contractor to raise a repair. This new approach was introduced as a direct result of the council's engagement with the Housing Ombudsman study and report produced on the subject of damp and mould.

It is estimated that this question will be asked in approximately 9,000 surveys per year. Residents are generally surveyed only once within any six-month period to prevent survey fatigue.

Residents who have suffered from damp and mould in their homes are given advice on the ongoing management of the home environment. This is delivered through resident liaison visits and the provision of printed information. The Council offer this advice in a supportive manner to help residents to live in their homes without the reoccurrence of mould and is alongside remedies to any structural defects, if found. In some cases, residents have raised concerns because they feel that the responsibility lies with the Council as a landlord, but to successfully eradicate damp in any home, some household management is required.

The council's resident liaison officers (RLOs) have been trained by the national fuel poverty charity NEA. In addition to advising on how to best manage the home environment, they are able to help residents to understand how to manage their resources and their heating systems. Where necessary the RLO help can help residents claim fuel poverty grants and liaise with our financial inclusion officers to ensure they are accessing all the financial support they are entitled to.

Between April 2019 and March 2021 £408,961 has been invested in servicing of mechanical ventilation and heat recovery units, repairing and replacing rainwater goods and completing the repair works under the specific mould remediation and prevention programme. A total of 4820 properties have benefited from these works.

In addition, the council invested £5,219,307 in improving overall building efficiency. These works included the replacement of central heating boilers in 1807 homes, the replacement of windows and/or doors in 331 homes and to replace the roof and improve insulation for 87 homes.

In February 2022 it was announced that the council would receive £3.2m following a successful bid under the first wave of the social housing decarbonisation fund. This funding has been specifically awarded to deliver a new ground-source heat pump project to the three high-rise tower blocks in Chadwell St Mary. It will connect all 273 individual flats to a shared ground loop heat pump system, replacing older and less efficient storage radiators and hot water systems within these three high-rise residential tower blocks.

All of the properties at the council's most recent new build developments – Bruyns Court, The Echoes, Bracelet Close, Alma Court and Heathlyn Close – have EPC ratings of at least C. 23% of these new build properties have this rating, with 75.2% rated B and 1.8% achieving A ratings.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will listen to the views of residents and understand their priorities in order to design, develop and deliver stock improvement programmes that target the things that matter	We will proactively engage with residents on their experiences of living in council-owned properties and their priorities for making homes fit for the future by embedding active engagement into the design of asset investment	Residents will be able to have their voices heard and priorities understood regarding what matters to them in future investment programmes in their homes and estates
We will invest in and embed new asset management technology in order to effectively direct housing investment for maintenance and improvement	<p>We will implement an integrated asset management solution and load the results of the 2021/22 stock condition survey to form the foundation for investment modelling and the design of planned maintenance programmes and monitor compliancy</p> <p>We will introduce BIM to support the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of council assets, and explore smart technology and IoT (Internet of things) solutions to enable real-time monitoring of stock condition</p>	<p>Residents living in council-owned homes will benefit from fiscally responsible property improvements that deliver value for money and improvements to living conditions</p> <p>Through BIM, residents will experience improvements in the ability of the council to respond to and resolve maintenance and repairs concerns in applicable buildings</p> <p>Residents will benefit from the use of IoT through unintrusive solutions, allowing the council to be alerted to stock condition issues affecting the property and for remedial action to be arranged swiftly and proactively</p>
We will embed proactivity in the approach to maintaining council-owned homes in order to achieve a good standard and mitigate the need for reactive repairs	<p>We will identify properties requiring significant investment over the next five to ten years by using detailed stock analysis and findings from the 2021/22 stock condition survey</p> <p>We will use this information to inform plans for planned and cyclical maintenance programmes to ensure properties are safe and comply with legislative requirements with components serviced regularly to extend their lifespan and reduce the need for reactive repairs</p>	Residents will live in well maintained homes, benefitting from investment at the right time and reducing the disruption of responsive repairs due to the failure of components

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will proactively share information relating to building and fire safety in order to support residents to feel safe in their homes</p>	<p>We will develop a communications plan to ensure consistency in the approach taken by the council in communicating about safety</p> <p>We will use the plan as an opportunity to share information with residents about how their building operates and the steps and actions, they can take to protect their safety within the home</p>	<p>Residents will be supported to better understand their homes in the context of building and fire safety to address any concerns they may have about the safety of their building and prevent them from experiencing harm in the event of any incident</p>
<p>We will develop a holistic approach to damp and mould in council-owned properties in order to significantly reduce occurrences</p>	<p>We develop and deliver against an action plan based upon the recommendations set out in the Housing Ombudsman <i>Spotlight on damp and mould</i> report, including a dedicated policy for this aspect of property management</p> <p>We will analyse the data from a stock condition survey undertaken in the winter months of 2021/22 to gain an accurate picture of any properties suffering from seasonal damp or mould problems</p> <p>We will ensure a fully coordinated approach with partners to the ongoing prevention and management of damp and mould and embed technology, modelling and predictive analytics to identify properties likely to be experiencing these issues</p>	<p>Residents will experience fewer instances of damp and mould in their properties as a result of the proactive approach to identification based on stock condition survey data and predictive analytics, allowing preventative work to be carried out in their home</p> <p>Where instances of damp and mould do occur, residents will receive support free of the stigma and judgement traditionally associated with the term 'lifestyle' in the context of this issue</p>
<p>We will support residents out of fuel poverty in order to improve health and wellbeing and quality of life</p>	<p>We will achieve EPC band C ratings across all housing stock by 2030 through direct investment in council homes from the housing revenue account and maximising the use of available funding streams</p> <p>We will ensure that officers undertake fuel poverty awareness training and are provided with the tools and knowledge to best support residents</p>	<p>Residents will benefit from proactive intervention, significant investment and access support to improve the thermal and energy efficiency of their homes, removing the harms to health and wellbeing of cold homes and fuel poverty</p>

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will increase the use of sustainable and renewable technology in our stock in order to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and support the council's green agenda</p>	<p>We will support the shift away from the use of fossil fuels by installing new, renewable technologies for heating and hot water needs in new developments</p> <p>We will reduce carbon emissions in the new build developments through installing renewable energy sources, using well-insulated materials in the new homes, fitting LED lights and installing efficient communal heating and hot water systems</p> <p>We will replace the electric storage radiators to 273 properties in three high rise blocks to provide a more efficient heating system linked to a ground source heat pump</p> <p>We will work with the council's suppliers and partners to reduce their carbon footprint, considering carbon emissions and contributions towards achieving net-zero when undertaking procurement activity</p>	<p>Residents will live in new and existing homes that have higher levels of thermal and energy efficiency, leading to reduced household costs relating to energy bills and more effective heating and lighting systems that are fit for the future</p>

Strengthen community safety and prevent anti-social behaviour

Context

The council holds considerable responsibilities to protect its residents from crime and anti-social behaviour by providing strategy, policy, and frontline enforcement services.

Crime is a broad and complex issue, impacting upon the health and wellbeing of victims and survivors, and wider society. Abuse and exploitation have the greatest and longer lasting impacts on victims and survivors.

Anti-social behaviour is any act that causes – or is likely to cause – harassment, alarm, or distress. It is also any act that can cause nuisance or annoyance related either to housing or the affected person's occupation of their home.

The quality of the local environment is impacted in part by anti-social behaviour in Thurrock. Examples include littering, nuisance vehicles, and drug dealing and use. These factors impact on perceptions among the community of safety and the interest in communities to enjoy their local area.

The *Charter for Social Housing Residents* sets out that every social housing resident should have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in. In relation to anti-social behaviour, it outlines that social housing tenants have a right to feel safe in their homes, without the stress, fear, and tensions that anti-social behaviour and crime can cause and encourages landlords to develop practical solutions to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in their areas.

The topic of anti-social behaviour featured heavily as a priority throughout the engagement for the development of this strategy, with particular concerns raised regarding the perception of feeling unsafe.

Most crimes remain unreported for several reasons. Instances of abuse and exploitation remain particularly hidden, leading to challenges in identifying, safeguarding, and supporting those who experience these harms.

The ways in which crimes are committed is changing. Greater sophistication and use of technology have further enabled crimes such as online abuse, exploitation, scams, fraud and drug trafficking. This requires us to constantly adapt our approaches to preventing crime, protecting, and safeguarding our residents, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Certain groups are more likely to be the victims of crime, including women and girls, children and young people, the elderly and those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Crimes disproportionately affecting these groups include but are not limited to domestic violence and abuse, sexual violence and abuse, hate crime, fraud, scams and cuckooing, as well as other forms of abuse and exploitation.

The rates of recorded violent crimes are higher in Thurrock compared to England and have risen sharply since 2013. The Thurrock Youth Offending Service are seeing young people with a more entrenched pattern of offending, further exacerbated by gang activity within the borough and an increase in the county lines model of offending. Concerns are also noted regarding the use of knives and weapons.

Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership brings together local organisations with the shared goals of reducing crime and the fear of crime, anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drug misuse and reducing re-offending.

The 2022/23 priorities for the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership are:

- Tackling disproportionality in relation to Violence Against Women and Girls – including sexual offences, stalking and rape, whilst recognising that men and boys can also be victims
- Breaking the cycle of Domestic Abuse – in line with the Domestic Abuse Duty and needs assessment
- Violence and Vulnerability – tackling gang related activity and offensive weapons to reduce drug driven violence
- Counter Extremism and Terrorism – preventing violent extremism locally
- Reduce harm to and safeguard victims from Hate Crime – including gender-based hate crime (misogyny and misandry)
- Tackling Community based Anti-social Behaviour and Safeguarding victims - including off road motorbike nuisance
- Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime
- Safer streets through increased visibility and community engagement
- Tackling offending – reducing high volume crimes e.g., burglary

Impact

Fear of crime is linked to poorer mental health and lower quality of life and can also be barrier to engaging in health improving activities outdoors (e.g., walking and running). Consistently heightened stress levels caused by feeling unsafe can also lead to a range of health problems. Those with poor health and fear of crime are more likely to suffer repeat victimisation. We want people feeling safer within their communities and increase public perceptions of safety.

Experiencing crime can have significant impacts on physical health, mental health and emotional wellbeing. These impacts are often dependent on the type of crime experienced and potentially affect many aspects of their life, including their housing, education, finances, and ability to work. Impacts can persist long after the abuse has ended with wider impacts including the effects on the victims' loved ones as well as societal impacts on the health service, social care and criminal justice system.

We want to improve our local, joined up response to crime, particularly abuse and exploitation. This includes improving approaches to prevention, responses to disclosure and providing victims/survivors with access to appropriate and holistic support that is trauma informed where appropriate.

Recent action

An action was undertaken in 2021/22 to implement a new noise nuisance reporting app, aimed at reducing duplication and allowing residents to report issues with greater ease. This has been implemented, offering an effective alternative to diaries and logs which would have been used traditionally.

Across the council, work is underway to develop and implement a new Community Safety Operating Model to improve the council's delivery of its community safety partnership strategy.

In conjunction with this, a new Community Safety Service is being developed. It will bring together the CCTV and Concierge teams from the housing service under a single structure along with the anti-social behaviour, community engagement, environmental enforcement, and civil enforcement teams.

Proposals have also been made to develop a new integrated centre for crime and enforcement (ICCE) within a central location that will house an advanced CCTV, command and control capability, supported by police and new community safety officers.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will work in partnership to reduce local levels of crime and opportunities for crime to take place in order to reduce the number of victims of crime and make Thurrock a safer place to live</p>	<p>We will work across the organisation to form a new <i>Community Safety Service</i> for Thurrock</p> <p>We will support the implementation of a new <i>Community Safety Operating Model</i> to improve the council's delivery of its Community Safety Partnership Strategy and a new <i>Integrated Centre for Crime & Enforcement</i> (ICCE) supported by police and new Community Safety Officers</p> <p>We will work across housing services to support the priorities identified by Thurrock Community Safety Partnership annually</p> <p>We will combat fly-tipping in our estates through targeted responses and enforcement powers where necessary</p>	<p>Residents will feel safer in their homes and neighbourhoods in Thurrock, resulting in improvements to quality of life and more positive perceptions of the local area</p>
<p>We will work in partnership to prevent and deter crime for those with increased risk of experiencing crime in order to better protect their safety and wellbeing</p>	<p>We will promote the Stay Safe Campaign, delivering multi-agency pop-up events to promote the safety of women travelling around the borough late at night</p> <p>We will develop a multi-agency data monitoring tool to ensure all reports of anti-social behaviour to all community safety agencies, can be identified. The tool will assist with identifying trends and analysis of data on repeat victims and perpetrators, including hate incidents and crimes</p>	<p>Residents who would otherwise be more likely to experience crime will feel safer and be at a reduced risk of harm</p>

What?	How?	Impact?
We will improve the local response to supporting victims/survivors of crimes to improve their health and wellbeing	We will improve the local response to victims of anti-social behaviour and crime to improve their health and wellbeing using a person-centred approach	Affected residents will be supported to ensure that underlying trauma is not left unresolved, and interventions promote and result in the resolution of issues
We will adopt new technology in order to better to record and monitor antisocial behaviour incidents and outcomes	<p>We will invest in and develop a Power BI dashboard to monitor real-time outcome data, and employ innovative technical solutions to improve ways to report and record antisocial behaviour incidents for residents</p> <p>We will develop an evidence and data-led approach to understanding the wider impact of anti-social behaviour and reduce the risk of harm to residents and communities</p> <p>We will examine data to focus on the effective anti-social behaviour interventions and update processes</p>	<p>Residents will experience timely and coordinated approaches to addressing and investigating their antisocial behaviour concerns</p> <p>Residents will benefit from the introduction of a data-led approach to tackling anti-social behaviour as it will provide evidence for more effective actions that can be taken to resolve their concerns</p>
We will communicate effectively about action taken to tackle anti-social behaviour in order to reassure residents	We will ensure direct, effective, and rapid responses to reports of anti-social behaviour and focus on reassurance and publicity for positive outcomes	<p>Residents will be encouraged to make reports of anti-social behaviour concerns as a result of evidence of positive outcomes</p> <p>Those reporting concerns will feel better supported due to swift and effective communication, mitigating any anxiety or uncertainty after submitting their report or concern</p>
We will embed safety principles in new developments in order to reduce the likelihood of crime or anti-social behaviour in the future	We will continue to deliver new council-owned developments to 'Secured by Design' standards	Residents living in new council-owned developments will feel safer and experience fewer concerns relating to crime at home and in their local area

Tackle domestic and sexual abuse and violence

Context

Domestic abuse and sexual abuse are still largely hidden crimes and measuring the true scale of the issue is complex. Domestic abuse and sexual abuse happen in all communities, regardless of:

- gender
- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- marriage or civil partnership
- pregnancy or maternity

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was passed into law in April 2021. The Act provided a new statutory definition of domestic abuse, introduced new laws and changes to existing laws, and placed new duties on local authorities, the Government, and other public bodies, such:

- The provision of safe accommodation for all survivors of domestic abuse
- Ensuring that fleeing abuse does not result in the loss of right to lifetime or assured tenancies when these were in place
- Ensuring that homeless people identified as survivors of domestic abuse are given priority

Domestic abuse and sexual abuse disproportionately affect women. Often the abuse is perpetrated by men and is more likely to happen to women who have a disability.

Information collected by Thurrock Refuge between April 2018 and March 2021 indicates that 295 victims of domestic abuse were provided with safe accommodation – 120 refuge clients with 175 children. The average age of domestic abuse victims in safe accommodation was 35, however the ages ranged from 21 to 71.

72% of those provided accommodation had children, and 7% were pregnant. 88% of Thurrock Refuge clients were British nationals, however 5% of clients had no recourse to public funds.

The top four areas (unitary or district level local authority) where Thurrock's Refuge residents were most likely to come from were Southend-on-Sea (13%), Thurrock (11%), Basildon (10%) and Barking and Dagenham (8%). Combined, these areas made up approximately two-fifths of all victims staying in Thurrock.

There is a strong association within some data sets and the deprivation levels across wards in Thurrock. On average, 52% of residents in safe accommodation in Thurrock were unemployed while approximately 42% of residents' employment status was unrecorded in the same time frame, based on a three-year cohort.

The unemployment rate is high which could be for a range of reasons, such as mental health needs, or given that 5% of residents required an interpreter and 9% of residents' first language was not English these may also be potential barriers in accessing and navigating employment or being financially able to continue to alternative accommodation.

Individuals identifying themselves as having a disability was an emerging trend in the data. Although numerically small, there is limited understanding of these needs and therefore requires greater focus. Mental health support emerged as the largest need for residents, corroborated by the understanding that emotional or psychological and jealous or controlling behaviour abuse types affected over half of residents each year.

The Domestic Abuse Act has defined children as victims in their own right, therefore data recording across agencies will have to capture this with greater accuracy for future assessments. The specific needs of children residing in refuge is not known and will be a focus for future assessments.

This assessment has highlighted that there is a need for a regular multi-agency analytical product, overlaying partnership data sets and reviewing them all together rather individually within own organisations. This would be of significant benefit to the local domestic abuse partnership board in assisting the local authority to deliver the duties under the Domestic Abuse Act.

'No space or capacity to provide support' was the second most recorded reason for being refused safe accommodation. There is a lack of specialised accommodation for minority groups or individuals who face additional barriers to reporting or for those who cannot/may not feel comfortable residing in current safe accommodation provision, such as males and LGBTQ+ people.

Impact

The recent assessment of the needs of domestic abuse victims residing in safe accommodation in Thurrock identified a number of characteristics and support needs of residents living in Thurrock Refuge. The following broad actions were recommended in order to appropriately meet these needs:

- improve provision to meet the needs of those residing in safe accommodation
- review current safe accommodation options to increase accessibility for all
- improve data collection and data sharing

As with many other areas of this strategy, the under provision of safe, suitable and affordable accommodation in Thurrock for those with specific support needs is a factor in limiting positive outcomes for survivors of domestic and sexual abuse and violence.

Challenges evidenced in this strategy regarding the provision of safe and stable housing for those fleeing abuse, include:

- a lack of social housing stock to meet 'move on' needs
- turning to private sector renting can contribute to financial instability and insecure tenure
- engagement with specific groups requires different approaches to improve underreporting

Extending safe accommodation buildings and capital spending is outside of the Domestic Abuse Act new burdens funding remit, however this has emerged as a gap in current service within Thurrock and will require further exploration.

Recent action

The council has conducted a review its of policies and processes to achieve DAHA accreditation – the benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse. Through this work, a new Domestic Abuse policy has been developed.

To reflect the council's commitment to tackling domestic abuse, the policy introduces several measures to ensure that residents receive a dedicated approach, considering the circumstance of each individual and always upholding best practice.

The policy sets out that residents can expect the council to:

- Get our response right first time
- Work with specialist services
- Be flexible in our approach
- Assist and guide survivors to obtain tailored support
- Ensure that survivors can remain in their property if they wish through the sanctuary scheme
- Safeguard survivors and their families
- Take a survivor centred approach
- Adopt a coordinated multi-agency response
- Proactively engage with 'hard-to-reach' groups
- Promote awareness of our zero tolerance support services
- Assist survivors to find alternative safe accommodation, and continue to provide support
- Ensure staff safety

Work to achieve the DAHA accreditation will continue into Spring and Summer 2022 and will demonstrate the council's commitment and coordinated community response to domestic abuse in areas such as case and risk management, inclusivity and accessibility, partnership working, and publicity and awareness.

Case study – Survivor-centred approach

A Tenancy Management Officer referred Client C to the Housing Safeguarding Team, following a disclosure of domestic abuse from her partner. Client C had mobility difficulties and her partner was her carer. Together, they held a joint tenancy and lived in a ground floor property.

The couple had left this property due issues within the neighbourhood and told the council that they had been targeted. Initially, they both moved into Client C's parents' home, however when she disclosed the domestic abuse that she had experienced from her partner, he left the property and the relationship ended.

The domestic abuse (DA) officer completed a Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment and identified a medium risk. The DA officer then completed a tailored intervention and safety plan based on conversations around the outcome of the assessment. Client C's parents were homeowners and had installed CCTV. As such, Client C felt safe there, however it was not appropriate for her long-term accommodation. A key part of the plan was to achieve independence for Client C with support for her mobility challenges.

The DA officer working alongside Client C asked if she would consider a sole tenancy, with any required adaptations provided in the property. Client C had not reported the domestic abuse to the police and did not wish to. She also shared that she did not wish to return to the joint tenancy; another key part of the intervention and safety plan was to ensure that Client C did not become homeless as a result.

The DA Officer arranged to complete some one-to-one sessions with Client C to help build her confidence and understand the effect of DA on self-esteem. During the first session, they completed the 'empowerment star' – a

method of learning and rebuilding confidence, assisting to jointly understand the help and support required. Client C completed a genogram, helping to identify the nature of the relationships they have within their family members. We understood that the domestic abuse had affected the positive family relationships, and as these had broken down the support which could have been offered by these relationships was absent.

Through the sessions, Client C was able to see that the break-up of her relationship with her partner was due to his abusive behaviour and decided she would report to the police. Client C was assisted to make a report to 101 and the DA officer arranged to be present when she gave her statement. While she was giving her statement, Client C also disclosed sexual abuse from her ex-partner. A referral to SERICC (South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre) was made, and they were able to offer the specialist support relating to with the sexual abuse she had experienced.

The DA officer worked with an anti-social behaviour (ASB) officer to take possession action on the joint tenancy on the grounds of DA. The therapeutic tools and Client C's statement was used to evidence the domestic abuse and the civil court granted possession of the joint tenancy to the council.

This was the first time the council had taken possession action on the grounds of DA in the housing service. Client

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will commit to tackling domestic and sexual abuse effectively, professionally, and appropriately in order to achieve the best outcomes for survivors of abuse	<p>We will implement and embed the new Housing Domestic Abuse policy, introducing measures to ensure that residents receive a dedicated approach that considers the circumstances of each individual and always upholds best practice</p> <p>We will deliver expert advice through a single route to support regarding housing, skills, employment, and other needs of people experiencing or who have experienced domestic and/or sexual abuse and/or violence</p>	Residents experiencing domestic and sexual abuse and violence will be supported using a person-centred, human and holistic approach
We will work to improve pathways into safe accommodation in order to best support those fleeing abuse	<p>We will review and revise the existing joint protocol for supporting those at risk of homelessness because they are fleeing domestic and sexual abuse through a coordinated approach with all those who are stakeholders</p> <p>We will improve access to safe and stable housing for survivors of domestic and sexual abuse and violence, across all housing tenure types by sourcing new accommodation options and improving existing properties and by developing housing options and initiatives to give people the choice to either relocate or remain in their existing accommodation</p>	Residents fleeing abuse will be able to access safe, secure and affordable accommodation that meets their needs at the point of move on and into the future, and are able to exercise choice in determining the outcome in line with their vision for a good life

Support vulnerable adults and children into housing

Context

There is an urgent need to reform the accommodation and care pathway for vulnerable residents in Thurrock, such as those with mental illness, and those leaving care.

The role that housing plays in mental health support for individuals is crucial. Therefore, providing the right type of housing is fundamental to the help individuals to recover and live well in their community, as well as reducing demand on statutory services.

Accommodation and care for individuals with the highest levels of need coupled with challenging behaviour has been identified as the most difficult to source and sustain in Thurrock.

The accommodation and care provision for individuals in Thurrock with mental illness consists of residential care, supported living and floating support. Anecdotal evidence across housing, health and social care indicates that there is a gap in provision for a 'missing middle' – people with needs that are too complex and challenging for supported living and are inappropriate for residential care, and for whom the gap between general needs housing and supported living is too great.

The current model does not accommodate the fluctuating needs of people with mental illness. Unlike other groups, mental illness is not a linear condition and without the right support and boundaries may result in instances of frequent admissions and placement breakdowns. An individual may require one or all levels a model of accommodation and care provision, at different times, for short or long periods of time. The majority will require a multi-agency approach to their support in the community; however, when this support is delivered directly by each responsible agency can add to the feeling of overwhelm and chaos for the individual.

Locally, there are instances of multiple high-cost placements that do not deliver the quality and outcomes aspired to. A lack of concerted focus on achieving what is important to the individual and little opportunity to review plans and adapt, mostly occurring at times of crisis, has led to a drive to transform supported living.

Local authorities have a duty, as a corporate parent, to ensure continued involvement in supporting young people as they leave care and move into independence until they are 25 years of age. This approach should mean that bureaucratic processes are overridden, and decisions are made with the child's needs in mind and as a priority.

Young people in care and leaving care can be highly vulnerable and at risk of experiencing multiple accommodation moves. They can often struggle to cope with the challenges of living independently at a young age without a family network, and they may need help to access services or deal with specific problems they face. Unfortunately for some this means they may end up at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Good practice guidance published by the Government in 2020 recommends that council housing departments and children's services should produce a joint protocol that sets out how they will work together to ensure:

- each care leaver has a tailored support plan as they transition to independent living
- those at risk of homelessness are identified early and action is taken to prevent it
- a quick, safe, and joined up response for care leavers who go on to become homeless

Impact

Current approaches to supported living experience a gap in provision, as outlined in the above section. The consequences of this are felt throughout the system in terms of delays to discharges and the provision of appropriate levels of support. Additionally, and more importantly for the individuals, this can lead to multiple placements in relatively short periods of time, out of borough placements leading to disconnect with their community and support systems, and spiralling costs.

Although there is an established pathway in place for care leavers through Head Start Housing, this initiative was not introduced to be the sole route into accommodation, meaning that there are care leavers whose needs are either being under or over-provided for through this route, resulting in the ineffective use of resource and impacting on the possible deliver of positive outcomes.

Properly directed investment of resources in appropriate housing related support services for vulnerable adults and children can eliminate waste and generate savings across the entire system, in addition to the fundamental benefits for individuals regarding choice, control, and independence in their lives.

Recent action

In March 2016, children’s services and the housing service developed a strategic partnership to support Thurrock’s young people to access suitable accommodation at affordable rates.

In December 2018, Head Start Housing was launched, aiming to provide suitable accommodation for Thurrock’s care leavers and a safe space to live and learn before moving on to a private rental or social housing tenancy. It has a portfolio of properties ranging from one to five-bedrooms, with varying levels of floating support to 24/7 provision.

The skills and behaviours of each care leaver are considered alongside their needs to enable selection of the right type of accommodation. Care leavers receive support from their personal adviser and from the Head Start Housing officer who ensures the property is and remains compliant with health and safety, is furnished with essential items, has access to wifi, and that utility bills are paid.

Care leavers are supported to access housing benefit and, when they are ready, education, employment or training using the home as a foundation.

The housing service made a commitment to provide spaces for 30 individuals to Head Start Housing by end of 2023, and by the end of 2021, 24 spaces had been identified.

The Head Start Housing strategy made provision to return as many care leavers as possible to accommodation in Thurrock by the end of 2023. For care leavers in education or with established networks out of borough, Head Start Housing remains committed to provide suitable accommodation out of borough and fulfils the council’s legal obligation to do so.

Considerable progress has been made in the past three years, and the Head Start Housing Strategy has been refreshed to shape and drive positive change over the next 5 years.

An integrated primary and community care (IPCC) locality model has been developed in response to challenges facing the delivery of mental health services. Practitioners such as social workers and LACs frequently feel frustration as a point of contact for people defined as the ‘missing middle’ but are subsequently unable to help until people were ill enough to meet the thresholds in place.

More broadly, it was recognised that the way mental health services had been organised left residents with a service that was difficult to access, fragmented and that focused on only biomedical aspects of treatment.

The new model has focused on:

- developing a seamless offer for those who need more support than primary care would provide but do not meet the thresholds for secondary care
- defining care packages to meet the needs of those in Outpatient caseloads to enable clinically safe transfer of care to the Primary Care Network Integrated Mental Health Teams with an embedded step-up and step-down function with a particular focus on psychological interventions,
- releasing capacity for the consultants to provide additional support to the Primary Care Networks and develop a more therapeutic service offer for those with complex needs ensuring quality specialist and personalised care.
- developing a holistic offer that allowed wider determinants of mental health such as housing and employment to be addressed together with the positive role that social and community connections can play in recovery.

The new model provides an inclusive and integrated service that blurs the previous hard referral boundaries between primary and secondary care, providing specialist support to practices, holistic support to residents and reduces the number of onward referrals and fragmentation within the previous system.

Having successfully piloted the model in one PCN, we are currently in the process of rolling out to all four at pace.

Thurrock Council has actively supported and participated in the Government's Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. A cross-organisational group was established to ensure a coordinated approach and private sector landlords were engaged to supply appropriate properties for this project.

The Well Homes team in the housing service has provided landlords and new tenants with support to ensure the smooth running of tenancies, as well as ongoing resettlement support after arrival in the UK. This support includes help with medical needs, arranging English lessons if required, setting up bank accounts, finding jobs and getting children into education.

The council has successfully worked to increase the amount of council-owned temporary accommodation located in the borough in recent years and has taken significant steps to date which includes the purchase of Brook House, now operating as a ten-unit temporary accommodation hostel. Feedback to date from households currently placed in Brook House has been positive with regards to the support and advice from officers and the quality of accommodation.

Thurrock Council has also been operating a Housing First programme for a number of years. This programme provides intensive support to people who are long term or recurrently homeless and have high ongoing support needs. The project has so far successfully supported seven individuals who were homeless or threatened with homelessness. They had faced persistent barriers to accessing housing, some of which were caused by a variety of health conditions and addictions resulting in complex needs.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will improve the supported and specialist housing offer in Thurrock in order to address shortfalls for vulnerable residents	We will work across the broader health, care, and housing system to better understand the gaps in supported and specialist housing provision in the borough and work towards meeting these needs	Residents will be able to access accommodation with the right level of support or care to empower them to live independently as possible in their local community Residents will be able to access support at the right level at the right time as a result of expanding the availability and range of supported housing provision
We will align housing staff with Integrated Locality Networks in order to implement an integrated approach to care and support planning	We will align housing allocations and homelessness staff within single Integrated Locality Networks around each Primary Care Network to design and implement an integrated approach to care planning, delivering bespoke solutions to residents with mental health problems that address their housing, addiction, mental health and other needs at the same time	Residents with mental health problems will experience fewer barriers and thresholds to securing appropriate accommodation as all support needs will be considered through a holistic, person-centred approach
We will continue to support the Head Start Housing initiative in order to provide suitable accommodation for care leavers as a foundation for their future	We will provide a further ten properties below market rental rates with space for 22 individuals to the Head Start Housing initiative by the end of 2027	More residents leaving care will have the opportunity to receive support from Head Start Housing where this is the approach most appropriate to their personal circumstances and needs

Improve estate standards

Context

As a landlord, the council is responsible for managing and maintaining large areas of communal space, both indoors and out.

The *Charter for Social Housing Residents* seeks to ensure that all social housing residents can enjoy good homes and neighbourhoods. Through the white paper, the Government states it would review the Decent Homes Standard and consider whether it needs to be updated to ensure it is delivering what is needed for safety and decency now.

In the white paper the Government went further, outlining that the Decent Homes Standard review would also consider how improvements to communal space around social homes could make places more liveable, safe, and comfortable.

Around 3,500 council-owned properties are located on estates or in areas with outside communal space that the housing service is responsible for maintaining.

Feedback from Thurrock residents during the development of this strategy included concerns about feeling safe in and around the borough's neighbourhoods, in particular relating to anti-social behaviour, drug crime and misuse, road and footpath safety, and inadequate street lighting.

Residents expressed that improvements to specific estates and neighbourhoods should be made following engagement with those who live in those areas, ensuring that local needs, priorities and concerns are fully considered.

Through recent satisfaction survey activity, the responses of tenants who gave satisfaction ratings of 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' were analysed. 40.9% of the dissatisfied responses related to the quality of work carried out, specifically relating to standards of cleaning and litter either not being picked up or left behind. 34.1% was due to the frequency of the caretaking, with perceptions that extending periods of time pass without any work being carried out.

Similar analysis was undertaken regarding drivers of dissatisfaction relating to grounds maintenance in and around the council's housing stock. Over half of the responses (54.5%) related to the frequency of grass cutting and cleaning of the area. A quarter of responses referred to the general quality of work with the majority of these mentioning cutting and trimming of grass and bushes, and 13.5% of tenants said that waste was left behind and the area was left untidy.

Impact

Dissatisfaction with the maintenance and upkeep of communal spaces and estates will significantly impact upon the overall perception of the environment within which residents live. If there is a feeling that estates are not being appropriately managed it detrimentally impacts upon resident pride in the local area and reduces overall levels of civic responsibility.

The same applies to resident perceptions relating to anti-social behaviour in and around estates. Without coordinated and visible action, undertaken in partnership with residents and the local community to address what matters, the fear that estates are unsafe places will continue to grow and perpetuate.

Both of these factors cause harm to the health and wellbeing of households living in the area, who would feel that neither their homes nor neighbourhoods were liveable, safe or comfortable as expected within the social housing white paper.

A potential action that an affected household could take would be to seek to move to other accommodation elsewhere in Thurrock, however as previously evidenced there are a shortage of properties, critical demand for affordable and social housing, and a significant number of other households with diverse housing needs requiring support.

Recent action

The council commissioned an industry review of caretaking and estate services to be undertaken by in Summer 2021, with the final report and recommendations being received in November 2021.

The group that undertook the review have extensive experience in supporting organisations to achieve excellence through effective use of data, benchmarking performance and the processes that are driving that performance and have an extensive data set to enable such comparisons across the sector.

An overall service improvement plan has been developed incorporating the recommendations and actions from the review that seeks to improve estate standards and service delivery across the council's homes and neighbourhoods.

A new vision for estate services has also been set as a result. The council aims to provide proactive and flexible estate services, working together with communities to provide safe and clean neighbourhoods that meet residents' needs, delivering value for money and supporting health and wellbeing.

The proposals for new housing development schemes led by the council, in particular those with communal spaces, integrate the principles of "Secured by Design" to help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and improve resident feelings of safety. This also includes potential to deliver improvements to existing housing areas, such as plans for development at Broxburn Drive that will deliver public realm enhancements, enable higher quality new housing designs and allow better integration with the existing homes and residents.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will implement a new approach to estate inspections in order to protect resident safety in estates and communal areas	<p>We will ensure that estates and communal areas remain safe and clear by delivering and embedding a new estate inspections quality and safety framework, supported by a new inspection regime</p> <p>We will rigorously inspect council-owned assets by accessing homes and communal areas more frequently to assess and remove health and safety risks including fire hazards and contacting hard-to-reach residents</p>	<p>Residents will experience improved physical safety and feeling of safety around the estates and neighbourhoods where the council's housing stock is located</p> <p>Residents will be protected from repetitive and severe hazards as a through the use of appropriate enforcement action available to the council</p>

What?	How?	Impact?
We will adopt a collaborative approach to improve safety on estates in order to address the issues that matter to local residents	<p>We will work across housing, with our community partners and with residents to make our estates clean, attractive spaces where residents feel safe, using lighting, CCTV, and environmental improvements to do this</p> <p>We will establish a programme of resident and ward councillor estate walkabouts to improve the connection to and understanding of the local area and the issues that matter most to those who live there</p>	Residents will benefit from targeted action and improvements in their neighbourhoods and estates that are informed by and aligned with their priorities, thereby strengthening connection with the area and improving perceptions of safety
We will invest in and embed technology in order to facilitate robust management of estate standards	<p>We will improve monitoring of standards and compliance by implementing and enable new technological solutions</p> <p>We will seek to use this data to provide transparency to residents regarding estate maintenance and standards in their locality</p>	Residents will have greater transparency regarding the provision of estate caretaking and maintenance services
We will implement new approaches in order to tackle issues of nuisance parking on estates and improve the appearance of local areas	We will replace high-cost wooden knee rails and bollards that are easy to remove with green infrastructure such as hedging and shrub plants in order to deter nuisance parking and improve the quality of environment	Residents will benefit from more effective and attractive deterrents to nuisance parking, improving the overall quality of the area around their homes

Chapter 7

Strengthen Community Engagement and Empowerment

The COVID-19 pandemic led people to experience significant periods of social isolation and separation from their friends, family, and wider support networks. It also saw communities come together, with people supporting one another through immensely challenging and testing circumstances. The collective strength and resilience showed within communities

This chapter considers how relationships are built and strengthened between residents, the areas in which they live, the communities of which they are a part, and the organisations and groups that provide support and the council.

A significant ambition of this strategy is to support communities to build resilience and to broaden engagement with them. This strategy seeks to use the wider system and its networks to take an integrated approach in supporting communities, giving residents active and meaningful roles in matters that affect them in the context of housing and their estates and neighbourhoods.

Improve resident satisfaction and access to information

Context

The Charter for Social Housing Residents seeks to ensure that landlords remain transparent and accountable to their tenants at all times. The white paper sets out that every social housing resident should be able to expect to know how their landlord is performing.

As a mechanism to achieve this, the Regulator of Social Housing is seeking to introduce a suite of tenant satisfaction measures for all registered providers of social housing, including local authorities. Whilst the specific measures are still to be determined, the indicative measures provided for consultation were grouped under the following headings:

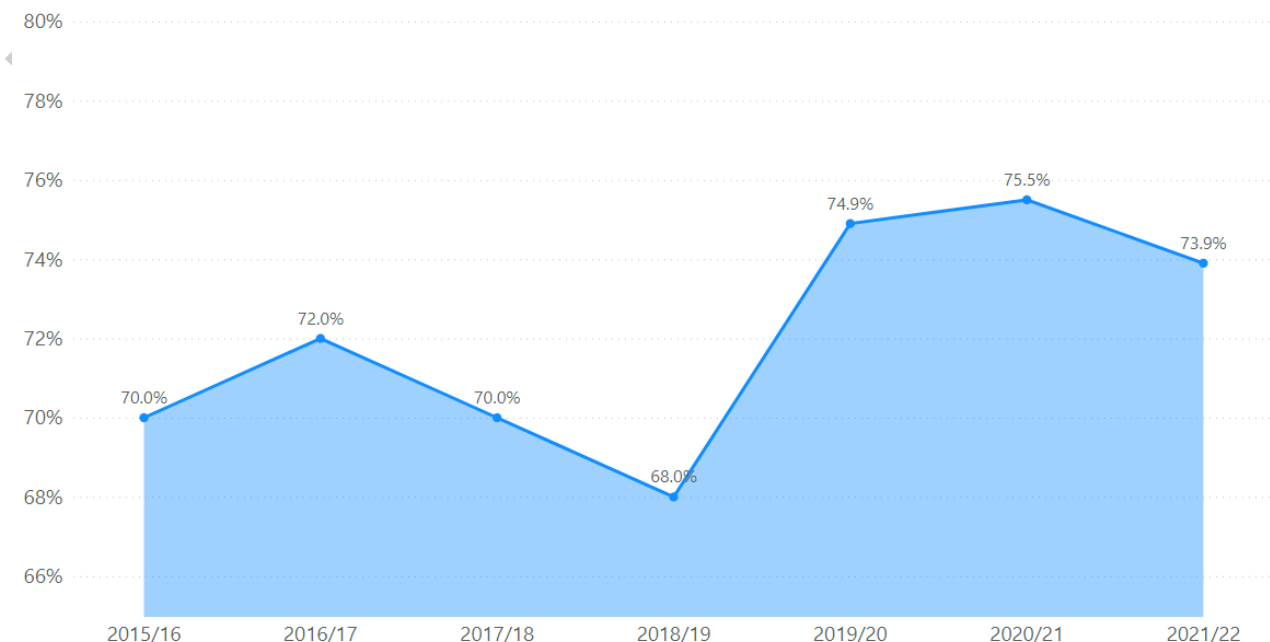
- Overall satisfaction
- Keeping properties in good repair
- Maintaining building safety
- Effective handling of complaints
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Responsible neighbourhood management

In addition to greater transparency, these measures aim to inform the regulator about landlord compliance with the consumer standards under a more proactive consumer regulation regime as proposed in the social housing white paper.

The chart below indicates resident satisfaction levels with housing services in Thurrock between 2015/16 and 2021/22 (to date).

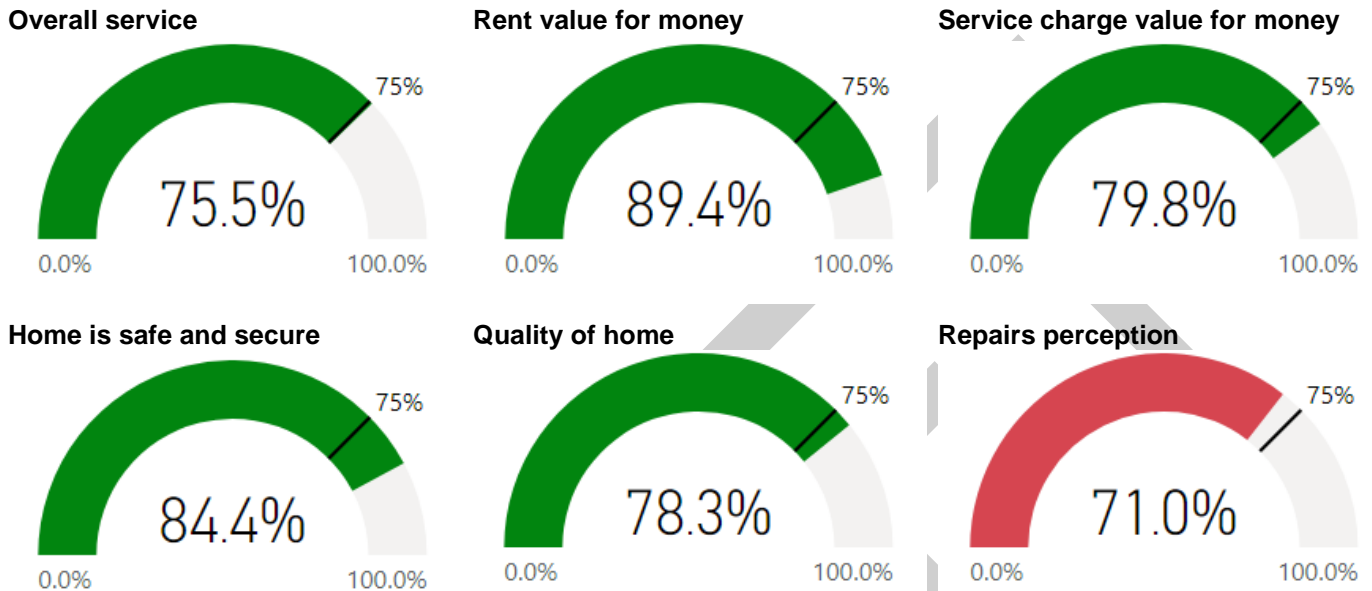
There has been a generally positive trend in recent years, however levels of resident satisfaction with housing services appear lower in 2021/22 to date.

% Tenant Satisfaction With The Overall Service Provided by Housing



In 2020/21, the last full reporting year, a total of 1983 ratings were provided by residents. Of these, 1497 reported that they were fairly or very satisfied with the overall service provided by housing. 234 residents provided neutral responses, and 252 shared that they were fairly or very dissatisfied.

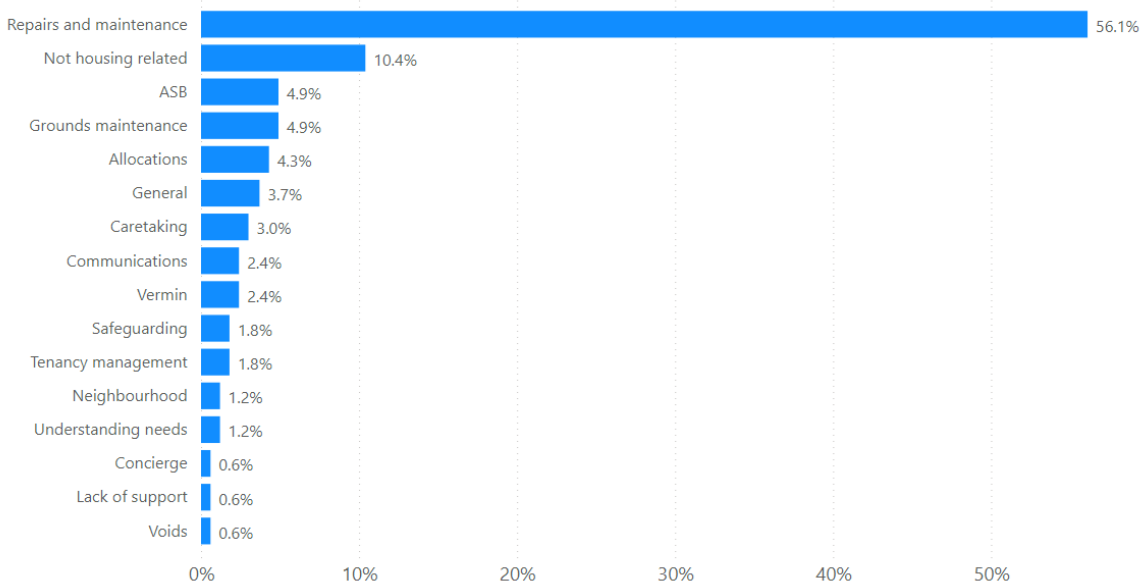
The visuals below show the resident satisfaction relating to several key measures for the 2020/21 reporting year, set against a target of 75%.



Whilst satisfaction was reported as being very high in some areas such as rent value for money and the perception that homes are safe and secure, the perception of the repairs service fell below the target set for the reporting year.

Analysis and categorisation of recent resident feedback indicates that presently, the repairs and maintenance service is the main factor for dissatisfaction with over half of all comments (56.1%) relating to it.

Dissatisfaction With The Overall Housing Service Reasons

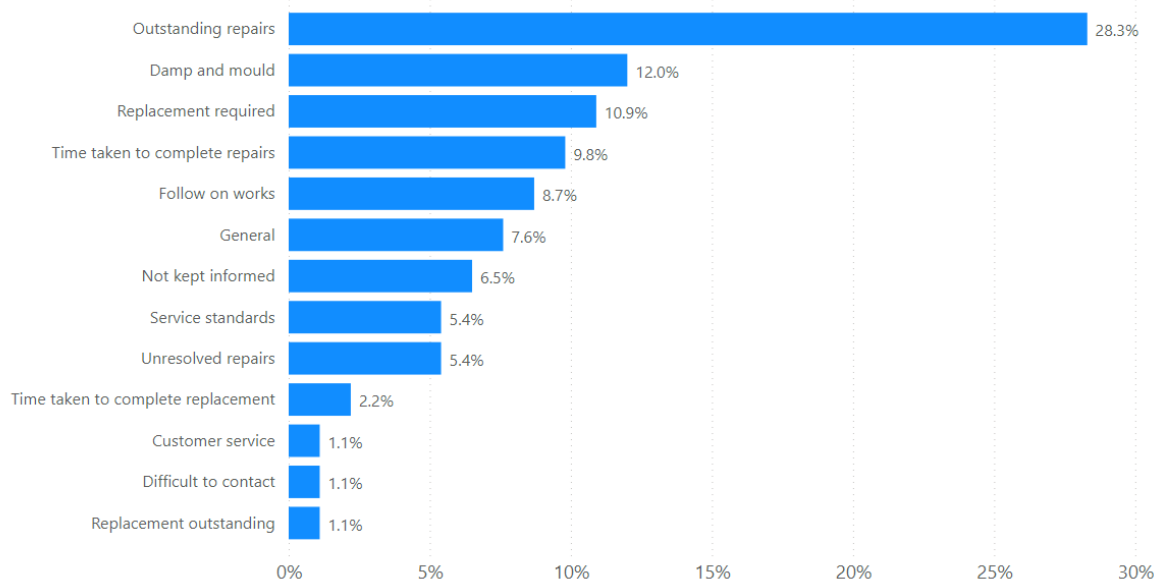


Within the repairs and maintenance category for dissatisfaction, outstanding repairs represented 28.3% of the feedback received.

Sheltered Housing tenants with a tenancy length of between 10 to 15 years, 15 to 20 years and under a year were 100% satisfied with the repairs service and the least satisfied have been a tenant between one and five years (70%).

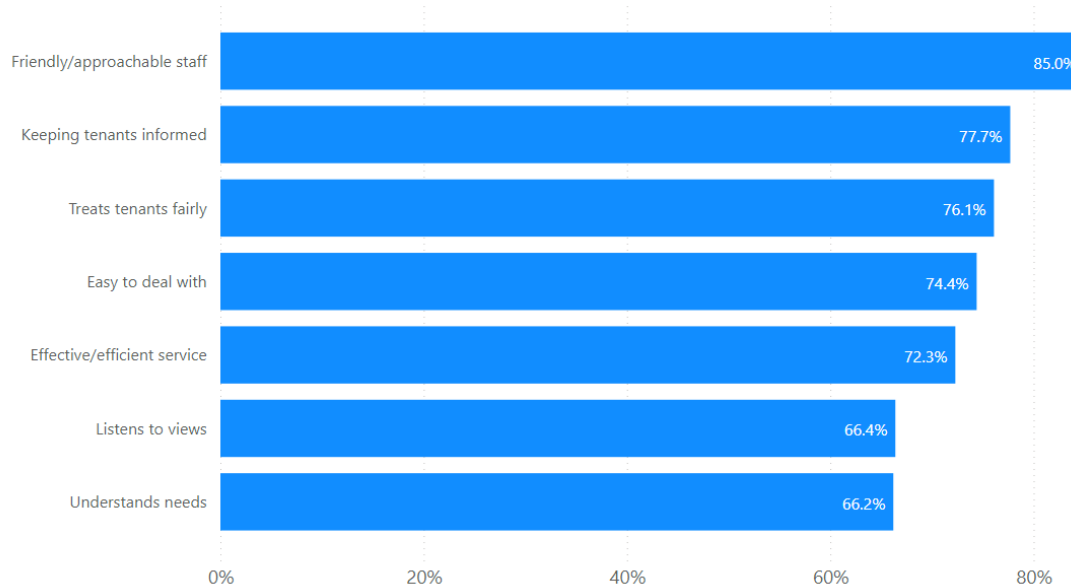
Tenants within general needs properties that have lived in their property for 10 to 15 years were most satisfied (76.2%), and those who had held their tenancies for between 15 and 20 years are the least satisfied (53%).

Dissatisfaction With The Overall Housing Service Reasons (Repairs and Maintenance Only)



Further to these key measures, tenants are also asked to either indicate whether they agree or disagree with measures relating to landlord characteristics. The results of this section for 2020/21 are shown in the chart below.

Tenant Satisfaction With Landlord Characteristic Measures



General feedback provided indicates that tenants find housing staff to be friendly and approachable, working to keep tenants informed and treating them fairly. Some concerns were raised by tenants regarding the ease of interaction with the housing service and how effective and efficient that service is.

However, the greatest proportions of dissatisfaction relate to tenant perception regarding the housing service listening to their views and understanding their needs.

The visualisation to the right is a word cloud of key terms used by tenants expressing their dissatisfaction when asked for their perception on whether the felt the housing service listened to their views and is helpful as an indicator of similar themes from different residents.



Listen, *nothing* and *done* all feature prominently in the word cloud visualisation. Analysis of underlying tenant responses show that these are related – among dissatisfied tenants there is the perception and experience that they do not see action taken when feedback is asked for or given about the things that matter to them.

Impact

It is important that the council tackles the drivers of resident dissatisfaction, as it can lead to wide ranging and harmful consequences for both residents and the council.

Dissatisfaction, as evidenced above, tends to arise from service failure of some form. Examples in the data include repairs remaining outstanding, tenants not being kept informed or updated, and not feeling listened to about what matters to them.

If dissatisfaction in these areas continue, there are avenues for formal expressions of concerns, including complaints and housing ombudsman investigations. Whilst these are legitimate routes of escalation available to residents when they feel something has gone wrong, they only offer the opportunity to react to a perceived or actual failure and tend to place parties in opposition, rather than proactively working in partnership to prevent the failure from occurring.

Tenant dissatisfaction, especially when it related to the landlord characteristics measures, can impact upon the trust that tenants have with housing services, and can reflect upon the wider council too. If tenants don't feel listened to, don't have access to the information they need and don't feel that their needs and priorities are understood, the damaged trust can be extremely difficult to repair, and will lead to broader challenges relating to community reception to possible changes introduced by the council.

Low levels of tenant satisfaction, in particular relating to feelings of being treated fairly by the council, can lead to tension within the community if there is an imbalance in equity and equality. This can be a contributory factor in other issues discussed in this strategy, such as antisocial behaviour, resident safety and estate standards.

Finally, tenant dissatisfaction can have an impact on staffing, leading to a greater turnover of officers. This, in turn, can lead to greater inconsistency in service, leading to further detrimental impacts on satisfaction and less time spent addressing what matters to residents.

Recent action

In June 2020 the housing service upgraded its Housing Online portal for tenants and housing register applicants. The system offers great potential for improving resident interaction with the council’s housing services and the ability reports and concerns to be submitted directly, for example relating to issues of anti-social behaviour.

An improved Housing Options offer is also possible through the Housing Online portal which will reduce duplication for staff, offer a more joined-up experience for residents, and increase the quality of data and reporting which are available.

Between July 2020 and October 2020, a full postal tenant satisfaction survey was undertaken by the council’s service provider, KWEST Research Ltd, which was sent to every tenant. The project used a multi-mode approach, comprising a postal census survey targeting all the Council’s tenant households, accompanied by email invitations and an online version to broaden survey reach and accessibility.

The survey results provide confirmation that the homes and services provided by the Council are meeting the needs of most residents. This is demonstrated by high proportions of residents expressing satisfaction with many key service areas including rent value for money, quality of home, home is safe and secure, neighbourhoods as a place to live and the overall Housing service.

The housing service has successfully made use of technology to send specific and tailored text messages to its tenants for a range of reasons, such as to provide information and support for rent accounts, share information about resident engagement days and to alert tenants to issues that may be affecting their blocks, such as lift repairs and maintenance.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will implement digital solutions in order to improve resident access to information and housing services</p>	<p>We will develop a digital strategy for housing and deliver against an action plan.</p> <p>We will improve digital access to housing services by enhancing the existing online tenant portal and developing new approaches for interaction, engagement and communication using technology</p>	<p>Residents will find it easy to access housing services digitally and be able to interact with housing staff through digital devices, if that is their preference</p>
<p>We will demonstrate our commitment to listen to residents in order to better understanding their needs and priorities</p>	<p>We will explore the reasons for dissatisfaction in relation to each individual satisfaction measure by deliver focus groups with tenants.</p> <p>We will close the contact loop with tenants by responding to the issues they raise, progress any actions required as a result and providing evidence of the outcome</p>	<p>Residents will be able to share their issues with the council directly, ensuring that the action required to address the issue is understood, with trust in the council that their feedback will be acted upon</p>

What?	How?	Impact?
We will tackle the drivers of dissatisfaction in order to make positive changes and improvements to the things that matter most to residents	We will use continuous learning make significant progress to address the causes of dissatisfaction by acting upon the feedback we are given from tenants	Residents will experience greater levels of satisfaction with their home, local area and the service they receive from the council
We will utilise technology and data analytics in order to better understand drivers of resident satisfaction and dissatisfaction	We will ensure that all feedback received is analysed and acted upon by developing a suite of integrated and connected dashboards for resident satisfaction, allowing for the relationship between multiple pieces of feedback to be understood and facilitating detailed assessment	Residents will find that the reasons for their dissatisfaction are better understood and will experience targeted responses to address the causes
We will proactively prepare to report against new national tenant satisfaction measures in order to make our performance as a landlord more visible to our tenants	We will implement a robust approach to recording, monitoring and reporting against the new tenant satisfaction measures that will be published by the Regulator of Social Housing by April 2023, to meet the first submission of data in Summer 2024	Residents will be better informed about the performance of the council as their landlord, and they will be empowered to hold the council to account through new regulation

Strengthen, integrate, and diversify community and resident engagement

Context

The *Charter for Social Housing Residents* sets an expectation for residents to have their voice heard by their landlord. Within the social housing white paper, the Government sets out that it will:

- expect the Regulator of Social Housing to require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can continually improve the way they engage with social housing tenants
- deliver a new opportunities and empowerment programme for social housing residents, to support more effective engagement between landlords and residents, and to give residents tools to influence their landlords and hold them to account
- review professional training and development to ensure residents receive a high standard of customer service.

The white paper also expects that the Regulator of Social Housing will require landlords to show how they have sought out and considered ways to improve tenant engagement.

Traditional forms of engagement, such as consultation and surveys, are not always effective and can even have an adverse impact upon wellbeing if people feel pressurised to take part or communities suffer from consultation fatigue.

Tpas, the tenant participation advisory service, recommends through its engagement standards that residents should have access to an appropriate range of engagement opportunities that reflects the resident profile. It also encourages landlords to respond to different needs in relation to equality and any additional support, evidenced in the delivery of services, engagement activities and communications to promote widespread engagement.

During the development of this strategy, residents stressed the importance of diversifying and expanding the opportunities and methods used for engagement. Recent years have seen significant growth of digital communication technology in homes, such as video calling and meetings, and the decline in face-to-face interaction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Engagement can take many forms, but the crucial factor for the future is that it is tailored appropriately. There may be residents who want to proactively engage with policy design, for example, and others who may simply want to know that they are being considered in the way the council implements change and keeps residents them informed.

Broader community engagement also includes elected members. Mechanisms are already in place through Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council to ensure that members are informed and engaged in matters relating to housing. This strategy will strengthen the relationship and information sharing between housing services and elected members relating to matters affecting the wards and communities they represent.

Voluntary sector organisations make a difference to the lives of communities, whether area-based or a community of interest. Many charities and voluntary organisations perform essential work that contribute to the fabric of our society. Often, they act as a vital referral resource for public services.

So much can be achieved through meaningful collaboration with voluntary sector organisations, rather than working in service-centric silos. The experience of working together to support communities through COVID-19 demonstrated the level of trust that already exists between the

public and voluntary sectors. Now more than ever, it is imperative that we support a sustainable third sector in Thurrock.

In Thurrock, the council recognises the value of a strong voluntary sector. In 2021, the council published its Collaborative Communities Framework to set out how it will improve the way it engages with communities, talks about shared concerns, and works better together.

The housing system is complex and ever-changing, and voluntary sector groups and organisations play a significant role in supporting and advocating for residents and communities.

Impact

The impact of traditional forms of consultation is that residents act as passive recipients of services provided by the council, providing feedback only when approached. Residents do not live their lives through our services, but through localities and neighbourhoods where many different factors combine to influence the quality of their lives. We need to move from an approach where we consult multiple times on services on strategies determined by us, to a single integrated approach based around place. Engagement needs to shift from being purely consultative to one of genuine co-design and co-production of new approaches to improve the quality of life of our residents.

Frontline staff have hundreds of interactions with residents every week, and staff groups like our tenancy management and sheltered housing officers have real insight into the needs of our neighbourhoods and communities, yet we never systematically collect this intelligence and use it to inform future strategy or delivery.

Locality based resident engagement provides the opportunity to develop offers of support and services that are designed specifically to meet the needs of that area. This makes the offered service more meaningful, prioritising what matters most to those in the local area and actively demonstrating evidence that resident feedback is being used constructively.

This approach would contribute towards a growing sense of community empowerment, with individuals becoming far more active citizens as they experienced a genuine sense of involvement and influence. It would also enable feedback to be delivered more consistently and quickly than is currently possible.

To further strengthen community empowerment, community reference and investment boards can be explored at estate or neighbourhood level, aligned with the approach set out in the *Case for Further Change*.

The principle of these boards is to devolve power from public sector organisations to communities for the funding of integrated services and deliver locally identified solutions, rather than centrally determined actions. To support this, the *Case for Further Change* proposes pooled funds at each locality level, so further exploration of this would be required to replicate this within a housing context.

Recent action

The housing services have strengthened its approach to resident engagement activity recently, working to share more information with tenants about subjects that matter to them.

In 2021, the council published a *Collaborative Communities Framework* for Thurrock to share the strengths and assets-based approach for how the council and its services intends to work with communities.

Co-produced through the *Stronger Together* partnership over three years, it sets out how we will work and enable our communities to co-design and influence decisions, address their own challenges and realise their own ambitions.

Case Study – Avon Green Garden

Avon Green comprises of 48 low rise flats. Prior to this project, the only space that residents could access were areas of hardstanding for washing lines, or small areas of grass at the front of the apartments. Spaces were uninspiring, had no function, and as a result were underused.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, a local resident had become increasingly aware of how isolated she and many of the residents had become, especially older people and parents with young children. To tackle this social isolation and support community cohesion, they suggested the creation of a therapy garden, providing a space where residents could come together to garden, chat and enjoy the space.

The local community was engaged from start to finish to secure real ownership of the garden and to tailor support that would meet the needs of the residents who would use and manage the garden. Engagement started by asking residents about their preferences for the space and images were provided to represent elements that could be included within the community garden. 79% of all residents were in favour of the garden.

From this activity an indicative design was produced to show residents all the elements included and what the garden would look like.

To ensure a sense of ownership and care residents were empowered to have their say on how the garden will look and be used. The indicative was shared with the local community for feedback and comments, and residents were asked what they would like to grow and if they would like support to get the garden up and running. We had 40% response rate with residents requesting a mix of flowers, herbs, vegetables and salad crops, and sensory plants.

A percentage of residents signed up to a capacity building programme to develop skills to support the use and maintenance of the garden.

Some residents shared concerns that the garden may attract anti-social behaviour or be damaged, however positive discussions took place with the local community which reflected the benefits the garden would bring.

In order to get the garden up and running we worked in partnership, engaging and consulting with teams across service areas; the Capital Programme Delivery Team supported to secure funding for the project through its partnering contractor Wates. The Tenancy Management Team and Caretaking Services were consulted on location and what could be included, with the Health and Safety Team and Corporate Risk Insurance Team providing advice on installation of the garden and what would be needed to ensure safe use and maintenance of the garden for our residents.

The launch event at Avon Green Community Garden was held in November 2021.

Seven residents and their families have signed up to the gardening group, agreeing to maintain and take care of the garden.

A training programme delivered through the growing season will be held at the community food growing garden and will provide the skills and confidence needed to plan, plant, harvest and maintain the garden. Training will be structured around the growing season for 'real time' learning. Sessions will run every six weeks to ensure success through the first year of growing and that everyone knows what they are doing and when.

The publication of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 and the *Case for Further Change* provide an opportunity and starting point to build on the foundation of the Collaborative Communities Framework, strengthening the relationship and engagement between housing services, residents and the wider community, voluntary and faith sector in Thurrock.

Action Plan

What?	How?	Impact?
We will embed an approach for co-design and improvement of services in order to meaningfully involve and empower residents and communities	<p>We will adopt an approach across housing services that empowers residents to formally and informally co-design solutions and provision, influence and make decisions, raise issues, input in the tendering of new contract arrangements and address challenges relating to housing in Thurrock</p> <p>We will achieve the Tpas Resident Involvement Accreditation for Landlords by completing the accreditation process to demonstrate our commitment to resident involvement and ensure our approach is effective and offers the best value for money</p>	<p>Residents will benefit from meaningful involvement in the way that housing services are provided and improved, ensuring that local priorities are properly understood and acted upon</p> <p>Residents will not have to rely on traditional consultative forms of engagement to have their views heard, and can trust that feedback provided through everyday interactions for service improvement will be taken forward and implemented</p>
We will implement community reference and investment boards at neighbourhood level in order to strengthen community empowerment	<p>We will develop proposals by following the approach for community reference and investment boards as set out in the <i>Case for Further Change</i> which will include exploring options for pooled locality funds</p> <p>We will work together with communities and the voluntary sector to deliver at a more local level, only centralising that which cannot be provided effectively in neighbourhoods and localities</p>	Residents will benefit from devolved power from public sector organisations to communities for the funding of integrated services and delivery of locally identified solutions, rather than centrally determined actions
We will embed professional standards in housing services in order to ensure high service standards and consistency	We will ensure professionalism in Housing services by providing training opportunities for staff across the service that meet or exceed requirements for training standards as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing	Residents will be treated with respect by knowledgeable, skilled, ethical, and inclusive housing staff.
We will develop opportunities to educate about housing in order to develop skills for independent living	We will build stronger links and relationships with the schools and colleges within Thurrock and create platform to engage with children and young people regarding housing and skills for living independently	Residents will benefit from the sharing of skills, knowledge, and information relating to housing in adult life

Chapter 8

Monitoring and Review

The Housing Strategy must be kept under constant review. This is partly due to the increased likelihood that legislation will be introduced during the lifetime of the document, which may have a material effect on the aims, objectives and actions outlined in the Housing Strategy. In addition, as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on housing becomes more apparent in the months and years after the document's publication, new priorities or actions may emerge.

The monitoring and review of the Housing Strategy will be undertaken by a new Housing Strategy Deliver Board that will be established. This Board will be responsible for monitoring the progress of the action plan published alongside the strategy. The action plan will be kept as a live document and regularly updated to ensure progress and that key actions are delivered within defined timeframes.

The Housing Strategy Delivery Board will absorb the Homelessness Partnership Board, forming a single body with responsibilities for the progress of key strategic documents relating to housing.

As outlined above, it is anticipated that new actions will be added to the action plan during the lifetime of the strategy. Additions may be a reaction to changes in external factors (such as legislation) or proactively if an opportunity arises. These additions will be managed appropriately and ensure that the key themes continue to be reflected throughout the action plan.

An annual update will be provided to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure appropriate oversight of the action plan.

Housing Resident Engagement Strategy

2022-2027

Thurrock Council

DRAFT

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Introduction

The Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-27 sets out the aims and ambitions of the Housing service in improving its interaction and communication with those who live in and around Thurrock Council's homes and neighbourhoods.

The Housing department interacts with over 10,000 households throughout the borough across a broad range of services and recognises that each these households is unique. As a result of this diversity, those who access Housing services must have the opportunity for their voice and views to be listened to, not just heard.

The significance of meaningful engagement with residents may never have been higher than it is currently. The impact of and response to the tragedy at Grenfell Tower shows how important it is for residents and communities to be able to access information, express their views and opinions on changes, and play an active part in the way that duties are fulfilled and services are delivered by the Housing department.

This strategy aims to set the framework for future action, which is meaningful and valuable to residents and communities, reinforcing the understanding that residents and communities must be at the centre of all that the Housing service does.

The document seeks to establish an approach that will see resilient and respectful partnerships formed and maintained between the Housing department and those who access its services. The strategy sets aims to strengthen resident participation in the scrutiny and governance of the Housing service, which will offer greater transparency into how the Housing service operates.

Through this strategy, the Housing department lays the foundations to improve the experience residents and communities have when interacting with its services and further improve those services through continuous learning. This approach will ensure that the Housing department remains responsive, adaptable and flexible to residents' and communities broad and changing needs.

In developing this strategy, the Housing service has worked alongside its Excellence Panel, representing the residents who live in and around the Council's homes neighbourhoods.

Corporate Context

Thurrock Council's vision and corporate priorities, adopted in January 2018, underpin this Housing Resident Engagement Strategy. The Council's vision is for Thurrock to be **an ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.**

Sitting alongside the vision are the three corporate priorities of People, Place and Prosperity.

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- high quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
- build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
- communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

At the centre of this strategy is the intention to continually improve Housing services to meet the needs of those who access them. The strategy sets out that partnerships with residents and communities are integral to the success of both this document and the wider Housing service.

Place – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future.

This means:

- roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
- clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
- fewer public buildings with better services

The Housing service is responsible for estates and neighbourhoods across the borough, and by working in partnership with residents and communities, their priorities can be better understood. This improved understanding will allow the Housing service to proactively address concerns and facilitate areas where residents can take pride.

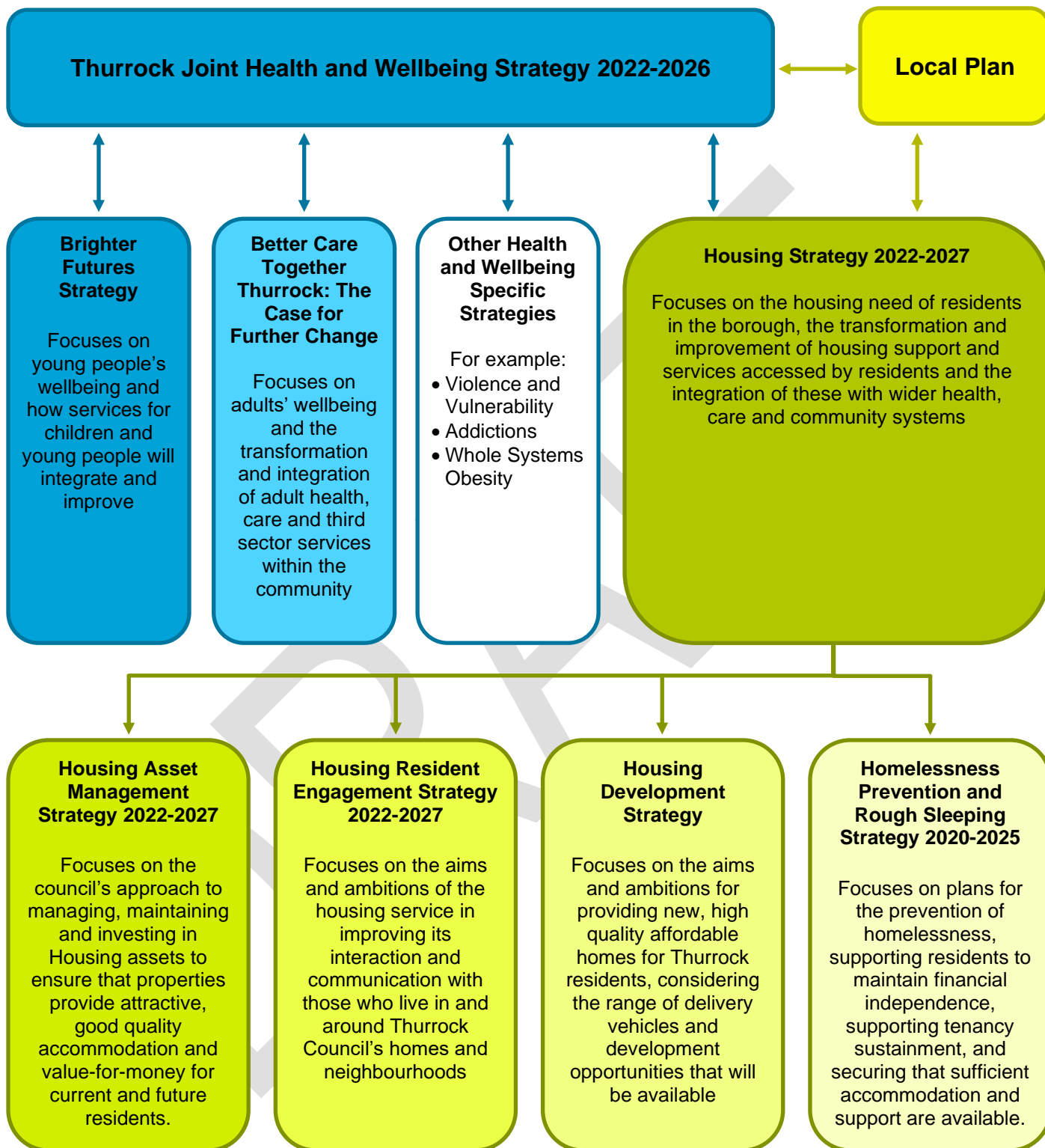
Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

This means:

- attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
- vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
- commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Through the key themes and strategic actions identified within this Housing Resident Engagement Strategy, the Housing service aims to build upon already successful and established partnerships to increase and further enhance the benefits and opportunities available to those who live in and around the Council's homes and neighbourhoods.

Strategic Context



Housing Vision and Principles

Housing Vision

Every Thurrock resident will have access to a safe, secure, suitable, and affordable home that meets their needs and aspirations, serving as a foundation to support their health and wellbeing.

Residents will be supported at home and in their local area through connected services, neighbourhoods, localities, and communities to achieve their vision of a 'good life'.

Housing and health are intrinsically linked. Access to a safe, secure, stable, warm, and affordable home will provide people with a solid foundation upon which they can better protect their health and support their wellbeing. If a home is lacking any of these factors, it will have a detrimental impact on the physical health, mental health, and general wellbeing of all those in the household.

A safe home can mean many things, such as being hazard free, or maintained in line with compliancy measures such as gas servicing and electrical testing. A safe home goes beyond physical maintenance and bricks and mortar; it can also relate to a resident's perception of safety in their home and in the neighbourhood or estate in which it is located.

A secure home can refer to the security of tenure, giving residents peace of mind and stability by having that solid foundation to build their vision of a good life, or it can again be considered in like with the perception of safety within the home from any outside harms.

The factors that determine a suitable home are wide ranging and tailored to the housing needs of each household. It can relate to the size, type, location, and accessibility of a property, but can also refer to the standard in which the property is kept, ensuring good quality accommodation is provided and that it remains well maintained.

The definition for an affordable home is also aligned with the specific needs and commitments of every household. Affordability of home is linked with many wider consequences, such as fuel poverty and impacts on physical and mental wellbeing

Health and wellbeing run through every aspect of this strategy. This document's strategic aims and objects are rooted in the fundamental aim of tackling health inequalities through housing to support Thurrock residents to live healthy lives.

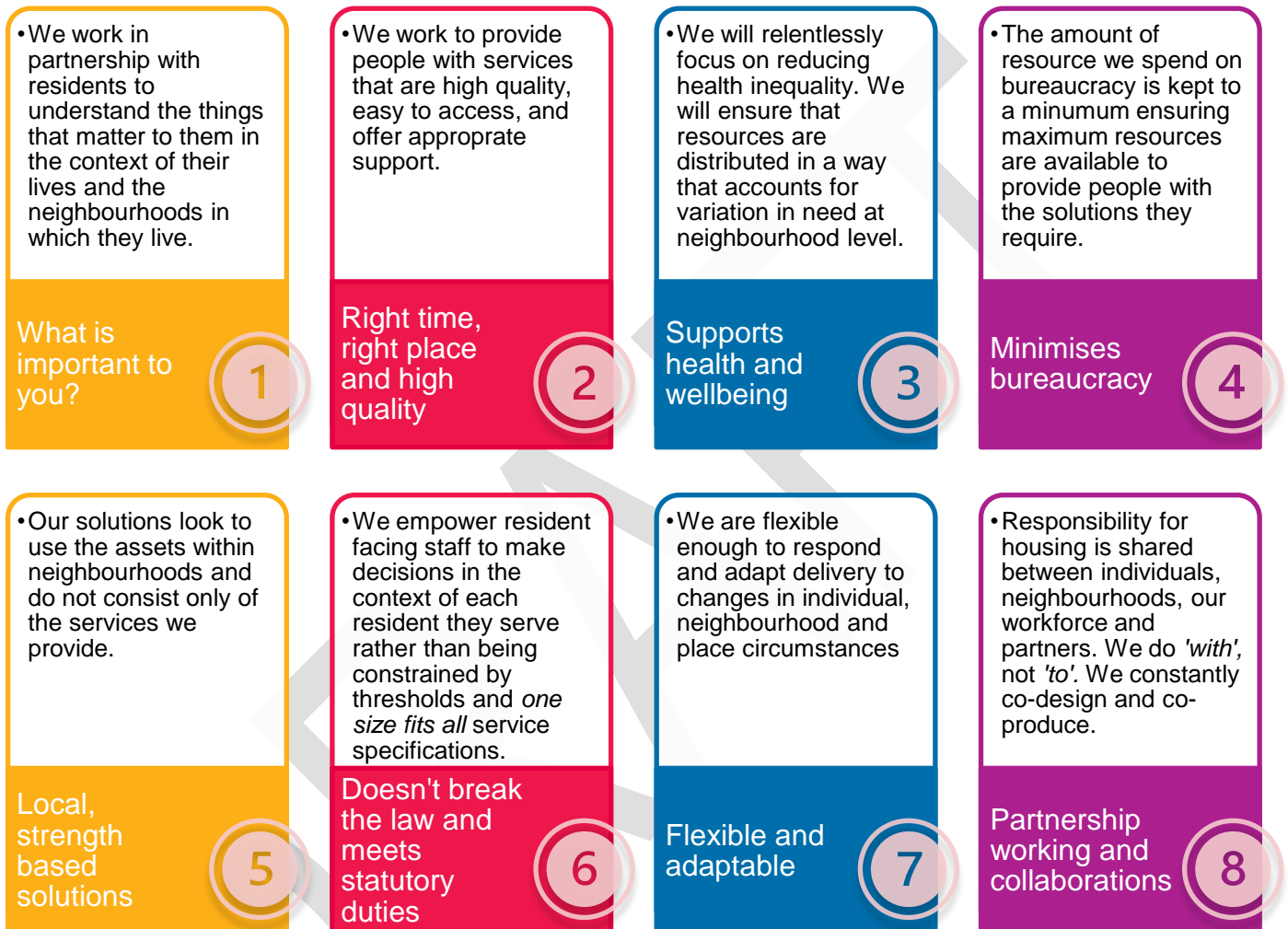
The vision for the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 is aligned with the aims of Domain 5 – Housing and the Environment within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026, outlined below:

Fewer people will be at risk of homelessness, and everyone will have access to high quality affordable homes that meet the needs of Thurrock residents.

Homes and places in Thurrock will provide environments where everyone feels safe, healthy, connected and proud.

Housing Core Principles

The Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027 has been developed to support the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 that set the basis for a new way of working for housing support and services in Thurrock. These strategies and the new way of working follow the below eight principles:



Regulatory and Best Practice Framework

This section summarises the key regulatory elements that define social housing providers' duties and obligations towards engagement with tenants and residents and other best practice examples in the sector.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard is one of four consumer standards with which registered providers of social housing must comply.

It sets expectations for registered providers of social housing to provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants, a clear approach to complaints and a wide range of opportunities for them to have influence and be involved.

Neighbourhood and Community Standard

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard sets expectations for registered providers of social housing to keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes they own clean and safe, co-operate with relevant partners to promote the wellbeing of the local area and help prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour.

National Tenant Engagement Standards - 3rd Edition (2021)

Tpas, the tenant engagement organisation in England, published their revised National Tenant Engagement Standards following the release of the Government's social housing white paper, *the charter for social housing residents*. Within the National Tenant Engagement Standards, Tpas reflects the renewed focus on recognising the importance of the residents' voice.

The document is not statutory nor regulatory, but it clarifies the standards, expectations, and commitments that social housing organisations should meet to ensure that resident participation is active, valuable, and meaningful.

The National Tenant Engagement Standards provides a framework of seven key activities that support a positive engagement approach and reflect best practice. These activities are:

- governance and transparency
- scrutiny
- business and strategy
- complaints
- information and communication
- resources for engagement
- community and wider engagement

This framework has been considered in the development of this strategy. It will feature further in the ongoing delivery of its actions and wider resident engagement activity across the Housing service.

National Context

The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper

In late 2020 the Government published its social housing white paper, The Charter for Social Housing Residents. Within this document, the Government set out its intentions to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when required.

The charter outlines the following seven elements that every social housing resident should be able to expect:

- to be safe in your home
- to know how your landlord is performing
- to have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- to be treated with respect
- to have your voice heard by your landlord
- to have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- to be supported to take your first step into ownership

Further to establishing these aspects, the Government announced plans to strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing. It aims to empower the regulator to be proactive in monitoring and enforcing the consumer standards that social housing landlords are held to, and requiring landlords to:

- be transparent about their performance and decision-making so that tenants and the regulator can hold them to account
- put things right when they go wrong
- listen to tenants through effective engagement

Whilst the white paper outlines these intentions, the timelines for implementing all the policies and measures announced in the document remain unclear. However, there is now progress regarding the Social Housing Regulation Bill, and steps have been taken regarding building safety.

It is expected that the Government will undertake periods of engagement and consultation and introduce legislation during the lifetime of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027. However, the housing service has already begun to work proactively to ensure that the council is in a strong position to meet and address the white paper proposals as more information becomes available regarding implementation.

Grenfell Tower Fire and Building Safety

The Grenfell Tower Fire on 14 June 2017 brought tenant and resident engagement into sharp focus for providers of social housing across the country. The tragedy triggered a wave of activity, such as tenant engagement roadshows by housing ministers and the development of a social housing green paper by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in 2018.

Most significantly, Dame Judith Hackitt was commissioned to undertake a review of building regulations and fire safety. The final report, entitled *Building a Safer Future*, was published in May 2018.

Among other recommendations, the report drew particular attention to the importance of engaging with residents, having appropriate strategies for engagement in place, and ensuring that residents had access to information and involvement in decision making.

The report also highlights the strength of structured engagement through residents' associations and tenant panels and the need for cultural change across the sector regarding the relationship between landlords and residents.

Although the report made these recommendations in the context of building and fire safety, they are applicable and appropriate to apply across the range of services provided by the Housing department.

Resident and Community Engagement during COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted how people interacted with others, including with organisations like local authorities and housing providers. Local authorities were required to engage with their residents and communities in new ways, in increased volumes and at a significant pace.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic restricted and prevented traditional face-to-face interaction and engagement activity with those who access the Council's Housing services, there were opportunities to find new ways to stay connected with residents and communities.

There was greater use of social media to share information with residents, the introduction of video calling in place of property visits and streamlined digital approaches to other general interaction. The level of contact with residents also increased to ensure that those most vulnerable could receive the support they needed through exceptionally challenging times.

The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that there is demand for developing new ways of engagement that take advantage of digital tools and resources available whilst retaining the capacity for traditional and in-person approaches to resident participation and sharing information.

Housing Resident Engagement Strategy Aims and Objectives

Five key aims have been identified through the process of designing and developing the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027. Together with their corresponding objectives, an action plan will be informed that addresses the engagement requirements set out in the regulatory framework for social housing providers and meets the engagement standards as recommended by Tpas.



Strengthen Community Engagement and Empowerment

Housing resident and community engagement is often fragmented into specific areas of responsibility or aligned by function. However, people want to be recognised, supported and engaged by a system that views them as a complex individual aiming to achieve their vision of a good life.

Engagement activity can often be standardised and traditional in its delivery, focussed solely on one single topic or issue determined on a borough-wide level.

Traditional forms of consultation mean that residents act as passive recipients of services provided by the council, providing feedback only when approached. Residents do not live their lives through our services, but through localities and neighbourhoods where many different factors combine to influence the quality of their lives.

People are likely to have multiple interconnected needs that would benefit from the support of multiple teams or organisations, but the current approach to sharing information about those needs is often lengthy, fragmented and features with elements of duplication.

This way of working increases rather than manages demand and does not realise the full potential that engagement opportunities can bring. It increases bureaucracy, costs, delays and wasted resource, and has negative impacts on those seeking to engage.

We need to move from an approach where we consult multiple times on services on strategies determined by us, to a single integrated approach based around place. Engagement needs to shift from being purely consultative to one of genuine co-design and co-production of new approaches to improve the quality of life of our residents.

Frontline staff have hundreds of interactions with residents every week, and staff groups like our tenancy management and sheltered housing officers have real insight into the needs of our neighbourhoods and communities, yet we never systematically collect this intelligence and use it to inform future strategy or delivery.

Locality based resident and community engagement provide the opportunity to develop offers of support and services that are designed specifically to meet the needs of that area. This makes the offered service more meaningful, prioritising what matters most to those in the local area and actively demonstrating evidence that resident feedback is being used constructively.

Broader community engagement also includes elected members. Mechanisms are already in place through Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council to ensure that members are informed and engaged in matters relating to housing. This strategy will strengthen the relationship and information sharing between housing services and elected members relating to matters affecting the wards and communities they represent.

This overall approach would contribute towards a growing sense of community empowerment, with individuals becoming far more active citizens as they experienced a genuine sense of involvement and influence. It would also enable feedback to be delivered more consistently and quickly than is currently possible.

Chapter 4 – Housing Resident Engagement Strategy Aims and Objectives

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will embed an approach for co-design and improvement of services in order to meaningfully involve and empower residents and communities</p>	<p>We will adopt an approach across housing services that empowers residents to formally and informally co-design solutions and provision, influence and make decisions, raise issues, input in the tendering of new contract arrangements and address challenges relating to housing in Thurrock</p> <p>We will achieve the Tpas Resident Involvement Accreditation for Landlords by completing the accreditation process to demonstrate our commitment to resident involvement and ensure our approach is effective and offers the best value for money</p>	<p>Residents will benefit from meaningful involvement in the way that housing services are provided and improved, ensuring that local priorities are properly understood and acted upon</p> <p>Residents will not have to rely on traditional consultative forms of engagement to have their views heard, and can trust that feedback provided through everyday interactions for service improvement will be taken forward and implemented</p>
<p>We will achieve more diverse representation in resident engagement and participation in order to better reflect the households which live in and around the Council's homes and neighbourhoods</p>	<p>We will undertake a project to identify the barriers that prevent residents from participating in existing engagement activity, such as involvement with the Excellence Panel</p> <p>We will take this learning and develop options and opportunities that encourage and empower residents and communities to participate and engage</p>	<p>Residents will be listened to regarding any challenges that may be preventing them from more active participation in engagement activity, and will be empowered by the Housing service acting, wherever possible, to remove or mitigate those challenges</p>
<p>We will develop a neighbourhood model for housing services in order to better focus on delivering what matters to residents in different localities</p>	<p>We will bring housing together at locality level and will empower front line staff from across housing to form relationships and networks across the system, to work together with residents to design and deliver meaningful, personal and holistic solutions</p>	<p>Residents will be supported by housing staff with an understanding of local priorities, networks and assets, improving the range of positive outcomes that can be delivered</p>
<p>We will collaborate more effectively with residents and other professionals that work across the Council's homes and neighbourhoods in order to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce social isolation.</p>	<p>We will embed housing support and services within the Integrated Locality Networks encompassing a wide range of health, care and third sector partners, allowing staff to collaborate with each other and with residents to co-design bespoke integrated solutions rather than making referrals</p>	<p>Residents will experience improved integration between related but historically disjointed services, increasing and improving access to information and sources of support</p>

Protect Resident Safety and Security

The *Charter for Social Housing Residents* sets out that every social housing resident should have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in. In relation to anti-social behaviour, it outlines that social housing tenants have a right to feel safe in their homes, without the stress, fear, and tensions that anti-social behaviour and crime can cause and encourages landlords to develop practical solutions to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in their areas.

The topic of anti-social behaviour featured heavily as a priority throughout the engagement for the development of this strategy, with particular concerns raised regarding the perception of feeling unsafe.

The council's aims for its homes and estates are that they should be places where residents enjoy living and working, where they take pride in their homes and can enjoy being part of a thriving community. The aspiration is to invest in and maintain high-quality accommodation that demonstrates the benefits of the council's repairs and capital investment programmes and positively influences the health and wellbeing of our tenants and residents.

Building and fire safety are matters of significant importance for any party or organisation involved in the management or maintenance of residential properties, and the responsibilities must not be taken lightly.

To meet its responsibilities, the council has a compliance regime to provide complete assurance to residents that their homes are well managed and meet required safety standards. Specific fire safety policies are in place to set how the housing service will manage and maintain its assets following the regulatory framework.

The housing service has begun to proactively develop an action plan to ensure that the council is in a strong position to meet and address the Social Housing White Paper proposals.

The housing service also stands ready to ensure compliance with the emerging Building Safety Bill, the implementation of recommendations made within the '*Building a Safer Future*' report following the Grenfell Tower fire, and any new duties or responsibilities introduced by the Fire Safety Act 2021. This aligns with the Charter for Social Housing Residents, as set out in the Social Housing White Paper.

Resident engagement is also crucial from the perspective of building management and safety. As part of the '*Building a safer future*' report published following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the introduction of a 'golden thread' was made. This golden thread aims to serve as a tool to manage buildings as holistic systems, allowing people to use information to design, construct and operate their buildings safely and effectively.

What?	How?	Impact?
We will work with partners, residents and other Council services in order to improve community safety across the Council's neighbourhoods	<p>We will work across the organisation to form a new Community Safety Service for Thurrock</p> <p>We will work across housing services to support the priorities identified by Thurrock Community Safety Partnership annually</p>	Residents will feel safer in their homes and neighbourhoods in Thurrock, resulting in improvements to quality of life and more positive perceptions of the local area

Chapter 4 – Housing Resident Engagement Strategy Aims and Objectives

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will adopt a collaborative approach to improve safety on estates in order to address the issues that matter to local residents</p>	<p>We will work across housing, with our community partners and with residents to make our estates clean, attractive spaces where residents feel safe, using lighting, CCTV, and environmental improvements to do this</p> <p>We will establish a programme of resident and ward councillor estate walkabouts to improve the connection to and understanding of the local area and the issues that matter most to those who live there</p>	<p>Residents will benefit from targeted action and improvements in their neighbourhoods and estates that are informed by and aligned with their priorities, thereby strengthening connection with the area and improving perceptions of safety</p>
<p>We will proactively share information relating to building and fire safety in order to support residents to feel safe in their homes</p>	<p>We will develop a communications plan to ensure consistency in the approach taken by the council in communicating about safety</p> <p>We will use the plan as an opportunity to share information with residents about how their building operates and the steps and actions, they can take to protect their safety within the home</p>	<p>Residents will be supported to better understand their homes in the context of building and fire safety to address any concerns they may have about the safety of their building and prevent them from experiencing harm in the event of any incident</p>
<p>We will listen to the views of residents and understand their priorities in order to design, develop and deliver stock improvement programmes that target the things that matter</p>	<p>We will proactively engage with residents on their experiences of living in council-owned properties and their priorities for making homes fit for the future by embedding active engagement into the design of asset investment</p>	<p>Residents will be able to have their voices heard and priorities understood regarding what matters to them in future investment programmes in their homes and estates</p>

Improve Communication and Interaction

The *Charter for Social Housing Residents* sets an expectation for residents to have their voice heard by their landlord. Within the social housing white paper, the Government sets out that it will:

- expect the Regulator of Social Housing to require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can continually improve the way they engage with social housing tenants
- deliver a new opportunities and empowerment programme for social housing residents, to support more effective engagement between landlords and residents, and to give residents tools to influence their landlords and hold them to account
- review professional training and development to ensure residents receive a high standard of customer service.

The white paper also expects that the Regulator of Social Housing will require landlords to show how they have sought out and considered ways to improve tenant engagement.

Traditional forms of engagement, such as consultation and surveys, are not always effective and can even have an adverse impact upon wellbeing if people feel pressurised to take part or communities suffer from consultation fatigue.

Tpas, the tenant participation advisory service, recommends through its engagement standards that residents should have access to an appropriate range of engagement opportunities that reflects the resident profile. It also encourages landlords to respond to different needs in relation to equality and any additional support, evidenced in the delivery of services, engagement activities and communications to promote widespread engagement.

Engagement can take many forms, but the crucial factor for the future is that it is tailored appropriately. There may be residents who want to proactively engage with policy design, for example, and others who may simply want to know that they are being considered in the way the council implements change and keeps residents them informed.

During the development of this strategy and the Housing Strategy 2022-2027, residents stressed the importance of diversifying and expanding the opportunities and methods used for engagement. Recent years have seen significant growth of digital communication technology in homes, such as video calling and meetings, and the decline in face-to-face interaction due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What?	How?	Impact?
We will build meaningful channels of communication between the Housing service and its residents and communities in order to allow information and feedback to pass freely	We will assess current modes and models of communication to determine their reach and effectiveness and identify any gaps where new communication solutions could be introduced to maximise the flow of feedback and information	Residents will have greater confidence that their feedback is being listened to and will receive updates in a swift and timely manner

Chapter 4 – Housing Resident Engagement Strategy Aims and Objectives

What?	How?	Impact?
We will design tailored approaches to engagement and communication in order to meet resident and community preferences and maximise interaction	We will develop an engagement framework that offers residents the opportunity to share their communication preferences and specify service areas of interest	Residents will have greater opportunities to have their voices heard regarding the subjects or areas that matter most to them, through a channel or format that matches their preference
We will embed resident engagement in estate regeneration in order to deliver projects that meet local needs	We will work closely with our residents to understand their priorities, identify required estate improvements, and progress opportunities for new housing to transform and enhance neighbourhoods.	Residents will have direct input, influence and opportunity to shape future council-owned developments and ensure that they meet their needs and priorities
We will implement and strengthen digital engagement and solutions in order to improve resident access to information and housing services, and increase diversity and participation through the use of technology	<p>We will improve digital access to housing services by enhancing the existing online tenant portal and developing new approaches for interaction, engagement and communication using technology</p> <p>We will establish a layered and interactive approach to digital engagement which goes beyond the use of social media in isolation</p>	Residents will find it easy to access housing services digitally and be able to interact with housing staff through digital devices, if that is their preference.

Enable Resident Scrutiny and Participation

The Charter for Social Housing Residents seeks to ensure that landlords remain transparent and accountable to their tenants at all times. The white paper sets out that every social housing resident should be able to expect to know how their landlord is performing.

As a mechanism to achieve this, the Regulator of Social Housing is seeking to introduce a suite of tenant satisfaction measures for all registered providers of social housing, including local authorities. Whilst the specific measures are still to be determined, the indicative measures provided for consultation were grouped under the following headings:

- Overall satisfaction
- Keeping properties in good repair
- Maintaining building safety
- Effective handling of complaints
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Responsible neighbourhood management

In addition to greater transparency, these measures aim to inform the regulator about landlord compliance with the consumer standards under a more proactive consumer regulation regime as proposed in the social housing white paper.

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will expand and develop the Excellence Panel and its subgroups in order to achieve greater representation of the diverse communities in the borough</p>	<p>We will review the current levels of scrutiny activity undertaken by the Excellence Panel and work with the group to adjust this accordingly so that appropriate levels of oversight are achieved</p> <p>We will use the learning from the project to identify barriers that prevent residents from participating in existing engagement activity to understand the challenges and implement a plan to achieve more diverse resident representation</p>	<p>Residents will be better represented by the membership of the Excellence panel and have greater opportunities to participate through an extended and expanded engagement offer</p>
<p>We will increase resident participation in the governance and scrutiny of the Housing service in order to remain transparent and accountable to residents</p>	<p>We will strengthen existing arrangements and develop new opportunities for residents to oversee the decision-making processes and shape Housing services where appropriate</p> <p>We will offer support, training and networking opportunities to those who want to engage in this way, helping to build knowledge, skills and capacity</p>	<p>Residents will have greater oversight of the operations of the Housing service. Residents will obtain greater clarity on Housing operations and have increased opportunities to shape and steer the direction of Housing services</p>

Chapter 4 – Housing Resident Engagement Strategy Aims and Objectives

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will demonstrate our commitment to listen to residents about their experiences in order to better understanding their needs and priorities</p>	<p>We will explore the reasons for dissatisfaction in relation to each individual satisfaction measure by deliver focus groups with tenants</p> <p>We will close the contact loop with tenants by responding to the issues they raise, progress any actions required as a result and providing evidence of the outcome</p>	<p>Residents will be able to share their issues with the council directly, ensuring that the action required to address the issue is understood, with trust in the council that their feedback will be acted upon</p>
<p>We will proactively prepare to report against new national tenant satisfaction measures in order to make our performance as a landlord more visible to our tenants</p>	<p>We will implement a robust approach to recording, monitoring and reporting against the new tenant satisfaction measures that will be published by the Regulator of Social Housing by April 2023, to meet the first submission of data in Summer 2024</p>	<p>Residents will be better informed about the performance of the council as their landlord, and they will be empowered to hold the council to account through new regulation</p>

Deliver Opportunities for Engagement

The *Charter for Social Housing Residents* sets an expectation for residents to have their voice heard by their landlord. Within the social housing white paper, the Government sets out that it will:

- expect the Regulator of Social Housing to require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can continually improve the way they engage with social housing tenants
- deliver a new opportunities and empowerment programme for social housing residents, to support more effective engagement between landlords and residents, and to give residents tools to influence their landlords and hold them to account
- review professional training and development to ensure residents receive a high standard of customer service.

The white paper also expects that the Regulator of Social Housing will require landlords to show how they have sought out and considered ways to improve tenant engagement.

Traditional forms of engagement, such as consultation and surveys, are not always effective and can even have an adverse impact upon wellbeing if people feel pressurised to take part or communities suffer from consultation fatigue.

Tpas, the tenant participation advisory service, recommends through its engagement standards that residents should have access to an appropriate range of engagement opportunities that reflects the resident profile. It also encourages landlords to respond to different needs in relation to equality and any additional support, evidenced in the delivery of services, engagement activities and communications to promote widespread engagement.

What?	How?	Impact?
We will share key information openly with residents and communities in a regular and timely manner in order to ensure transparency	We will share information across a range of formats and mediums, including the publication of an Annual Report co-designed with residents	Residents will be able to access information with greater ease and will be able to hold the Housing service to account accordingly, in line with the Social Housing White Paper proposals. Residents will have the opportunity to take ownership of the development of an Annual Report for the benefit of residents in and around the Council's homes and neighbourhoods, ensuring that residents are formally informed about the actions of the Housing Service
We will proactively engage with communities across the Council's neighbourhoods in order to establish stronger relationships between the Housing service and residents	We will expand and strengthen the physical and digital opportunities for engagement on a locality and neighbourhood basis, providing more regular localised opportunities for residents to engage on the topics that matter most in their area	Residents will have greater opportunities to share and participate in activities that will directly support or benefit their local areas and communities

Chapter 4 – Housing Resident Engagement Strategy Aims and Objectives

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will adopt a data and case study led approach to assess the impact of engagement activity in order to provide residents with useful and valuable opportunities for engagement</p>	<p>We will develop a new framework for assessing the effectiveness of engagement activity using qualitative and quantitative data</p> <p>We will monitor and review the feedback and collected data related to engagement activity in order to steer, design and tailor future events according to resident wants and needs</p>	<p>Residents will be empowered to have their voices heard regarding the engagement events and activities that the Housing service offers, ensuring that these reflect good value for money and are aligned with resident priorities</p>
<p>We will learn from best practice and innovation across the social housing sector in order to coordinate engagement activities and events that are meaningful and of value to residents</p>	<p>We will regularly review the Housing service's approach to Resident Engagement against that of leaders in the sector and use peer partnerships to identify areas for development</p>	<p>Residents will benefit from the continual advances in approaches to engagement and the use of technology that other social housing providers are pioneering with their tenants</p>

Monitoring, Measuring and Review

A robust monitoring and review process will be implemented to measure progress against the strategic priorities presented in this document.

Firstly, an action plan will be developed, aligned with the priorities and themes from this strategy, developed alongside residents and other key stakeholders with reviews undertaken in regular intervals.

It is intended that progress towards the delivery of this action plan will be monitored on an annual basis by an established group of residents and the Housing Strategies Delivery Board.

Further to this, and building on the Deliver Opportunities for Engagement theme, the Housing service will seek to co-produce an annual report with residents, highlighting each year's projects and successes.

Finally, a system for recording resident feedback on engagement and project delivery will be established. This approach will utilise case studies to reflect on positive outcomes and identify areas for improvement.

Throughout the lifespan of this strategy, there is an expectation that new actions will be added to the action plan, reacting to changes in external factors (such as legislation) or proactively if an opportunity to do so arises. These additions will be managed appropriately and will ensure that they continue to reflect the key themes of this strategy.

Housing Asset Management Strategy

2022-2027

Thurrock Council

DRAFT

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Introduction

Thurrock Council's Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 sets out the strategic principles to be applied for all future housing asset investment decisions. It provides a framework to be applied when considering future options for investment in the housing assets, ensuring that they continue to offer quality and affordable homes for current and future residents, optimising generated income to achieve the best value for residents.

The strategy demonstrates how the council's housing portfolio will meet its priorities and sets the strategic direction for those involved in the day-to-day management of the stock and future housing asset investment decisions. The housing service manages circa 10,000 council homes, including approximately 900 leasehold properties. The council has made a significant investment in its stock through the Transforming Homes programme and is committed to efficiently managing, maintaining, and investing in these homes.

This strategy aligns with the council's corporate values, the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 and the national policy context. It works alongside the HRA business plan in identifying the levels and timing of investment required to ensure the asset is maintained appropriately.

This strategy provides guiding principles that allow the council to maintain and enhance its housing stock in both the short-term and the future. It ensures the council works transparently, keeping residents engaged throughout the processes and fosters a sense of joint ownership.

Effective maintenance is essential to ensure council properties continue to meet housing needs and remain sustainable. A reactive maintenance policy supports this strategy, alongside a fit to let standard, health and safety procedures, a fire safety policy, and a suite of investment and development programmes. These ensure that the council manages its housing assets to meet the needs of residents and meets all regulatory requirements.

This strategy also recognises that further investment may not represent the best value for some assets or meet the community's future needs. Buildings in this category would undergo an asset review process that fully considers resident views. This full appraisal of the different options will inform the most appropriate decision for the future of the asset.

The council's strategic ambition is to ensure the delivery of good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods. The council seeks to invest in its assets and the local environment, creating places that support and promote the health, happiness and wellbeing of residents in the borough.

This strategy presents approaches to improve the council's housing stock by working with residents to invest in areas that will deliver the best outcomes and build pride in well maintained and improved homes.

The resident's voice is a crucial factor when delivering improvements. Communication and engagement will ensure the council works together with residents and delivery partners to refine the home improvement approach via retrofit. Through continued engagement and listening to feedback, the council aims to achieve high resident satisfaction with their home.

New and emerging legislation around building safety, decent home standards and the net-zero carbon agenda, in conjunction with an ageing stock, place significant financial pressures on the Housing Revenue Account. It is acknowledged that the council will need to explore external funding and continue to lobby central government for additional financial support to enable it to deliver this strategy.

Corporate Context

Thurrock Council's vision and corporate priorities, adopted in January 2018, underpin this Housing Asset Management Strategy. The council's vision is for Thurrock to be **an ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.**

Sitting alongside the vision are the three corporate priorities of People, Place and Prosperity.

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- high quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
- build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
- communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

Delivering high-quality housing across all tenures is central to ensuring positive health and wellbeing outcomes for residents. The council will ensure that services represent value for money, going over and above statutory duties, with high levels of customer satisfaction.

Place – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future.

This means:

- roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
- clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
- fewer public buildings with better services

This strategy supports the corporate aims by ensuring the council's properties provide well-maintained quality homes suitable for residents' needs and in which they are proud to live.

In October 2019, the council passed a motion to declare a climate emergency and take urgent action to reduce its carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030. This strategy supports the decarbonisation agenda while improving the overall energy efficiency of the assets, ensuring the homes provide affordable thermal comfort.

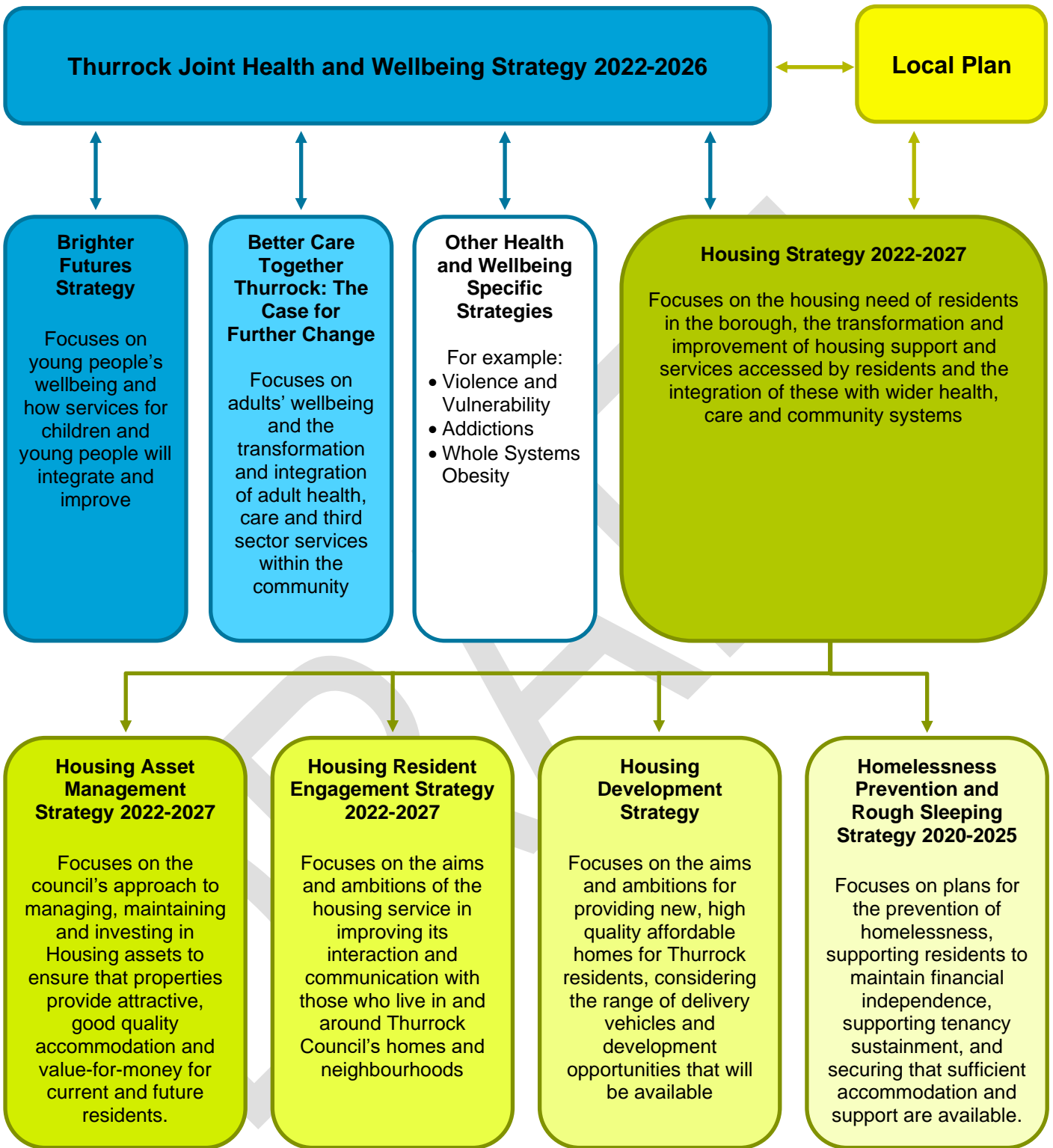
Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

This means:

- attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
- vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
- commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

The strategy supports the local economy with employment and training opportunities and the additional community benefits secured through contracting partnerships as social value.

Strategic Context



Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026

The Thurrock Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026 is the highest-level strategic document that describes our collective plans to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. The theme of the strategy is *Levelling the Playing Field*, and the strategy sets out high level actions to address health inequalities across six domains.

- Healthier for Longer including mental health
- Building Strong and Cohesive Communities
- Person Led Health and Care
- Opportunity For All
- Housing and the Environment
- Community Safety

As housing and the environment features as a domain of health inequality in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, there is a strong link with the aims and objectives of this Housing Strategy. Both documents will drive forward positive improvements for the health and wellbeing of Thurrock residents.

The local plan sets a vision and framework for the future development of Thurrock, drawn up by the local planning authority with wider engagement and consultation with the community.

Better Care Together Thurrock: The Case for Further Change

The *Case for Further Change* strategy sets out a collective plan to transform, improve and integrate health, care and third sector services aimed at the borough's adults and older people to improve their wellbeing. It looks at specialist housing specifically designed for older adults, promoting independence by improving housing choices and provision for older people today.

Local Plan

The local plan addresses many issues affecting local people. There are policies that cover development issues in relation to education, health, community safety and sustainable development. It also contains policies on more traditional, but important, planning activity such as housing, employment, leisure and sport, natural and historic environment, and community facilities.

The local plan supports the practicalities of providing new homes, through the identification for sites and areas where development is permitted and the creation of planning policy that meets priorities in the borough. The Housing Asset Management Strategy will feed into the development of the new local plan, ensuring alignment.

Housing Vision and Principles

Housing Vision

Every Thurrock resident will have access to a safe, secure, suitable, and affordable home that meets their needs and aspirations, serving as a foundation to support their health and wellbeing.

Residents will be supported at home and in their local area through connected services, neighbourhoods, localities, and communities to achieve their vision of a 'good life'.

Housing and health are intrinsically linked. Access to a safe, secure, stable, warm, and affordable home will provide people with a solid foundation upon which they can better protect their health and support their wellbeing.

A safe home can mean many things, such as being hazard free, or maintained in line with compliancy measures such as gas servicing and electrical testing. A safe home goes beyond physical maintenance and bricks and mortar; it can also relate to a resident's perception of safety in their home and in the neighbourhood or estate in which it is located.

A secure home can refer to the security of tenure, giving residents peace of mind and stability by having that solid foundation to build their vision of a good life, or it can again be considered in line with the perception of safety within the home from any outside harms.

The factors that determine a suitable home are wide ranging and tailored to the housing needs of each household.

The definition for an affordable home is also aligned with the specific needs and commitments of every household. Affordability of home is linked with many wider consequences, such as fuel poverty and impacts on physical and mental wellbeing.

The vision for the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 is aligned with the aims of Domain 5 – Housing and the Environment within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026, outlined below:

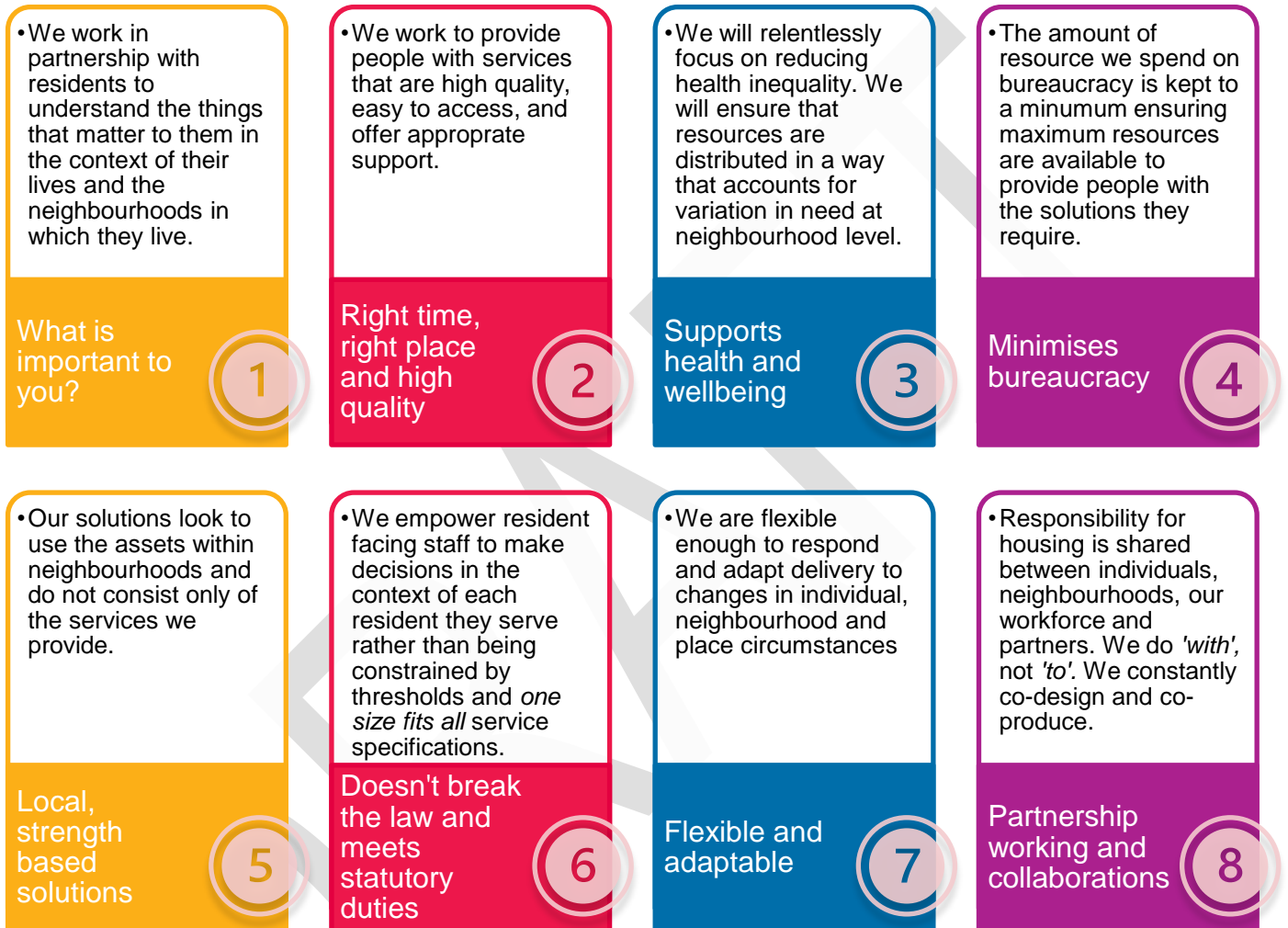
Fewer people will be at risk of homelessness, and everyone will have access to high quality affordable homes that meet the needs of Thurrock residents.

Homes and places in Thurrock will provide environments where everyone feels safe, healthy, connected, and proud.

Housing Core Principles

The Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027 sets out the strategic principles to be applied for all future housing asset investment decisions.

It works in support of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 that set the basis for a new way of working for housing support and services in Thurrock. These strategies and the new way of working follow the below eight principles:



Legislation and Regulation

The Housing sector continues to see significant changes to the regulatory framework that sets the standard for resident and building safety. The tragic event at the Grenfell Tower shook public trust and placed a spotlight on how the housing sector and construction industry operates; the investigations that followed revealed significant failings across the industries.

This led to the fundamental changes introduced through the social housing white paper, *A Charter for Social Housing Residents*.¹ These documents aim to place residents back at the heart of building safety and deliver changes to ensure that every social housing resident is safe in their home.

The publication of the draft Building Safety Bill² in July 2020 has set the parameters of what owning and managing residential buildings will look like in the future.

The underlying aim of the new legislation is to create a new era of accountability within the industry and to set clear roles and responsibilities for managing building safety in relation to fire and structural safety.

The government has produced a Fire Safety Bill, which became the Fire Safety Act 2021 and passed into law on 29 April 2021. The act supports the government's implementation of the specific recommendations arising from the Grenfell Enquiry Phase 1.

These documents supplement the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and the council must maintain policies and procedures to ensure compliance with these. A key underlying principle in this area is competence. Therefore, the council must ensure that through the delivery of all works, its staff and external delivery partners have the necessary skill, knowledge and experience to undertake the work they are involved in.

The council has always aimed to ensure safe environments for its residents and will work to achieve full compliance with the Building Safety Bill

¹ The social housing white paper, *A Charter for Social Housing Residents*, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

² A copy of this document can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-building-safety-bill>.

Local Context

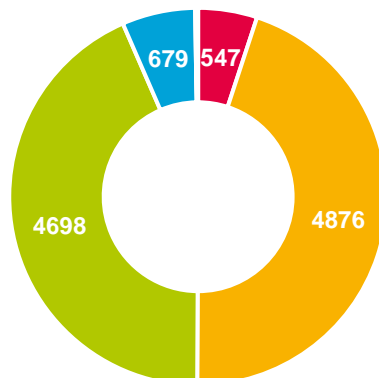
Current stock

The council owns around 10,000 homes, which includes over 1,000 sheltered housing properties across the borough. Half of the council's general needs properties are three-bedroom homes, and the remaining majority comprise one and two-bedroom flats. The tables below show a more detailed breakdown of stock by archetype.

Housing stock by archetype

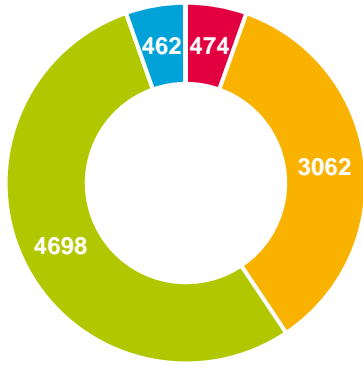
Property Type	0 bed	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	6 bed	Total
Bungalow	56	446	22	22	1	0	0	547
Flat	439	2615	1567	255	0	0	0	4876
House	0	22	818	3608	237	10	3	4698
Maisonette	107	0	89	478	5	0	0	679
HMO Rooms	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
Total	602	3091	2496	4363	238	10	3	10808
Leasehold	344	226	175	147	0	0	0	892
Travellers site pitches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64

Main Housing Stock by Archetype



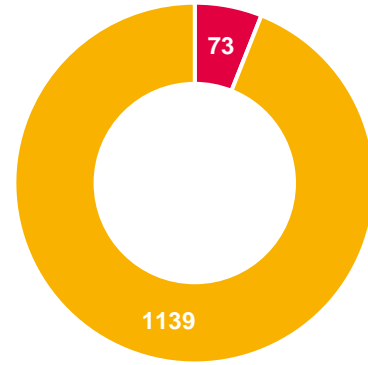
■ Bungalow ■ Flat ■ House ■ Maisonette

General Needs Housing



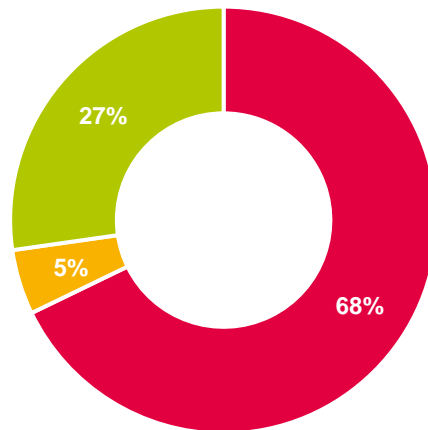
■ Bungalow ■ Flat (inc 55+) ■ House ■ Maisonette

Sheltered Housing Stock



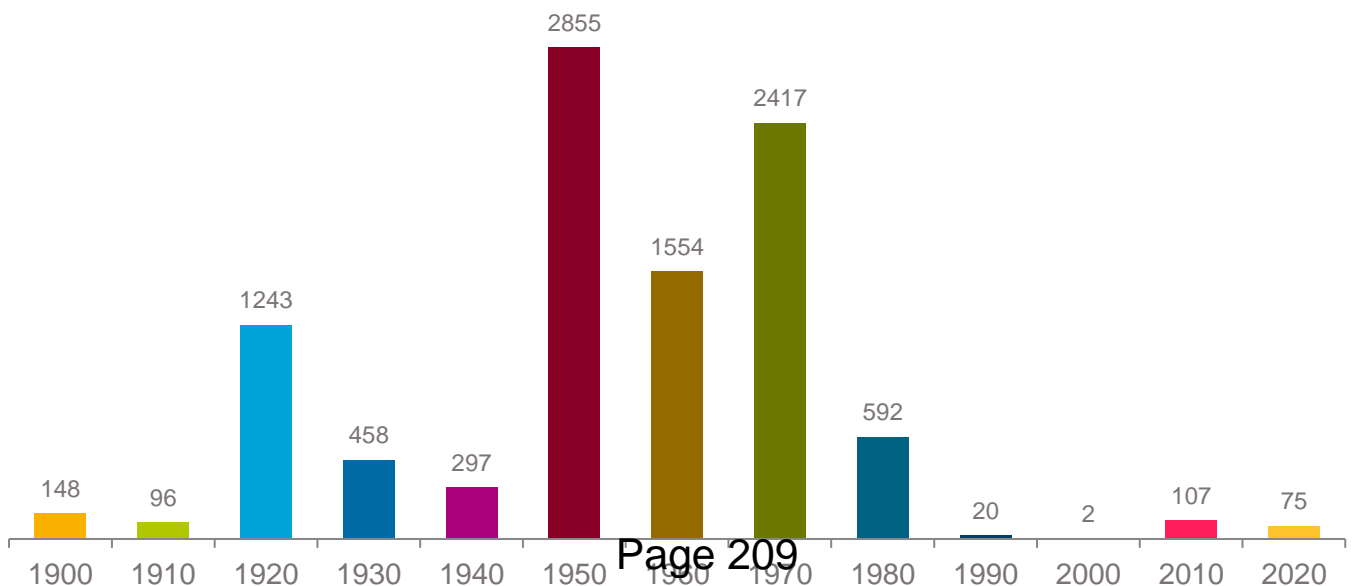
■ Bungalow ■ Flat

General Needs Flatted Accommodation

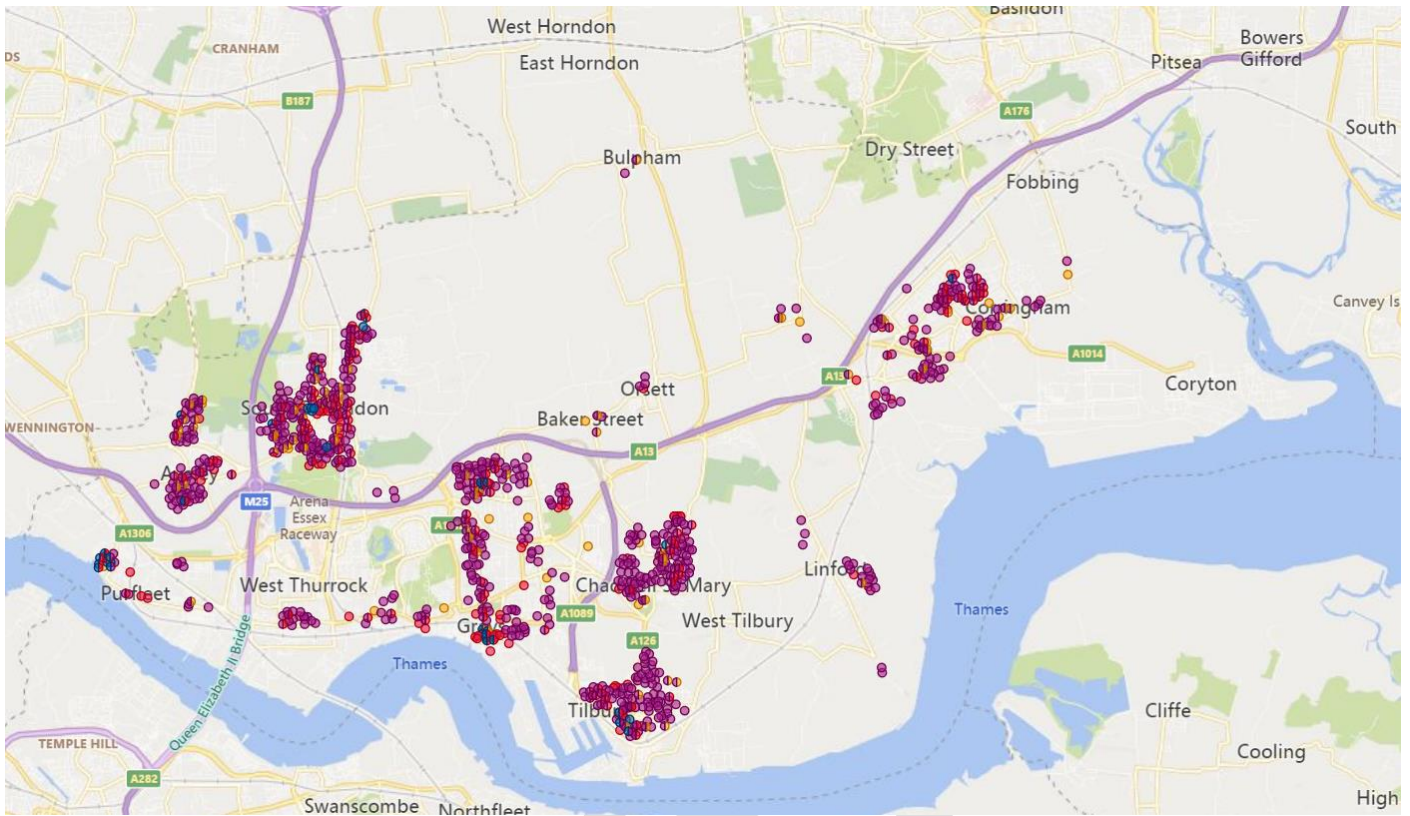


■ low rise: 1 - 3 storeys ■ medium rise: 4 - 5 storeys ■ high rise: 6 storeys and above

Property Age Bands



Location of housing stock in Thurrock



Stock Condition

One of the most critical aspects of active asset management is maintaining accurate records of the stock's condition, attributes and performance. To ensure the integrity of the stock data, the council aims to undertake condition surveys of a percentage of the stock every 3 to 5 years.

The council maintains this critical information on an asset management database that records all property attributes, anticipated lifespan and energy performance. This information will be recorded using new software in 2022 that will support ongoing compliance monitoring with a central record of all servicing and certification.

The majority of the current asset data has been informed by a condition survey undertaken in 2017, when the council undertook 3223 surveys.

These surveys covered internal and external elements of the buildings, communal areas, parking areas, garages, outbuildings and recreational areas on housing owned land and provided an overall energy assessment of the properties.

Overall, the condition survey demonstrated that the stock was in a generally fair to good condition, this being the case with 70% of the properties. Specific themes emerged, noting that the elements that required prioritisation primarily concerned property exteriors.

The 2017 survey identified an optimum level of financial investment in the stock over a 30-year period which exceeded the amount of capital expenditure factored into the HRA Business Plan, with significant investment required in non-residential assets such as garages.

Since 2017 capital works totalling over £46m have been made in the residential stock to address the priorities identified. The Transforming Homes programme, completed internal improvement

targets in 2019 and moved on to prioritising the external refurbishment, including the replacement of any remaining single glazing. Between 2019/20 to 2020/21, 732 properties have benefitted from external refurbishment and double-glazed window replacement, including street properties and 90 blocks of flats.

A further stock condition survey targeting 30% of the stock started the winter months of 2021/22. The aim being to update overall stock condition data rather than diagnose specific repairs and defects, which the council would be made aware of through day-to-day reporting processes. The survey has targeted the winter months to accurately picture any properties suffering from seasonal damp or mould problems. This survey will further inform the investment programmes over the next 5-30 years.

Non-traditional build properties

Within the Thurrock housing stock, the council have 418 non-traditionally constructed properties, all of which are tenanted family-sized homes.

The term non-traditional generally refers to prefabricated building systems, frames and construction methods known as Prefabricated Reinforced Concrete (PRC) properties. These properties are designated defective within the meaning of the Housing Defects Act 1984,³ now part of the Housing Act 1985.⁴ They have the potential for corrosion of embedded steel reinforcements and are generally considered by lending institutions not suitable for mortgage.

These properties require significant investment to bring them up to today's standards and continue to provide suitable homes for residents. In 2019/2020, the council reviewed all the housing owned PRC properties. Some properties and locations presented options for improved housing through redevelopment. However, this approach is not possible in the majority of sites. A prioritised investment programme is in place to refurbish properties where redevelopment is not an option.

In addition, the council owns properties on the Flowers estate in South Ockendon of a construction type known as 'Lecaplan'. These properties were constructed in the late 1960s and replaced the earlier PRC properties built initially. Although these properties are still of non-traditional construction, they are not designated defective and, as such, are considered mortgageable by most lenders. Many of the original council homes on this estate have been purchased by former tenants under the Right to Buy. The council, however, still owns over 180 of these properties.

Property Type	Total
PRC Design designated defective	234
Lecaplan	184
Total non-traditional council owned properties	418

³ <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/acts/housing-defects-act-1984>

⁴ <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/acts/housing-act-1985>

Housing Development

The strategic need for units by size, type and tenure (such as shared ownership) is driven by the Housing Strategy with regard to the levels of the existing supply of unit types and demand from those eligible under the council's housing allocations scheme.

The council have established a target to construct up to 500 new council homes between 2019 and 2029. Ninety-three have been completed, with a further 35 new homes under construction and an established pipeline of new sites.

These new homes will arise from a range of opportunities. They could be delivered directly by the council or in partnership with other developers across the housing sector. The produced asset must meet high design and construction standards consistent with the council's need to maintain stock condition, be affordable to build and live in, meet modern standards, and achieve residents' aspirations.

The following objectives guide the development programme:

- To develop good quality, well-designed and sustainable homes that contribute to placemaking
- Build homes that meet borough-wide needs and are affordable to live in
- Take a planned approach to development opportunities that provide value for money whilst maximising supply within targets.
- Use procurement practices that support local business, provide good value and encourage social value outcomes.
- Adopt a range of delivery routes that encompass direct delivery alongside working with the private sector.

Sheltered Housing

Thurrock Council has 1212 sheltered housing properties, which are a mix of low-rise flats and bungalows. These properties all have adapted bathrooms for improved accessibility. A recent programme has also improved the accessibility to the communal entrances of the blocks.

Some complexes and properties are more difficult to adapt to meet the modern standards of accessibility. Where this is the case, these properties will be subject to a full review and are considered for possible decommissioning from sheltered status. This review considers the viability of improvements to bring the stock up to the necessary standards and the availability of alternative suitable sheltered properties in the area. If a decision is taken to decommission, all existing residents are offered more suitable alternative accommodation.

Garages and Garage Sites

Thurrock Council holds a stock of 2275 garages and 290 garage plots located across the borough. The garages are brick or concrete purpose-built structures located in many settings varying from standalone blocks in large sites to small, isolated buildings on small sections of land to garages located under townhouses and blocks of flats.

The overall garage portfolio is in a "fair" condition. It would require a significant level of investment if the council is to maintain and improve all of these assets in the coming years.

The council has been reviewing long term regeneration and development opportunities across the garage stock and plans to undertake a refreshed stock condition survey of the garage portfolio. This survey will include a structural appraisal and allow the council to ensure that the garage portfolio is being maintained appropriately to ensure that these assets are safe and secure. Additionally, it will inform a longer-term investment and management strategy to identify the appropriate level of long-term investment and potentially identify garage sites that can be considered for other uses that would better serve the community and the wider borough.

The aim is to identify under-utilised or uneconomical garage and plot sites which have the potential to be converted into new housing developments.

Connectivity

A number of the council's housing assets have mobile / satellite infrastructure on the rooftops that are owned, maintained and operated by various national and international mobile network providers. A number of individual wayleave agreements cover this infrastructure, and the council must continue to manage these agreements and consider them when managing and maintaining the portfolio.

This strategy supports the council's digital connectivity agenda. The housing service will continue to work with external organisations to build the connectivity network around Thurrock for the betterment of all residents in Thurrock in relation to digital networks.

The housing department also supports the potential development and delivery of an IoT wireless network around the Thurrock borough. A network of this type would facilitate and support smart infrastructure in residents' homes and Council assets that can improve safety and living conditions.

Resident Engagement

The council's Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022 – 2027 sets out the council's plans over three years, focusing on the council's customers and committing to developing greater opportunities for resident involvement and feedback

This strategy enforces the council's commitment to a partnership with tenants, leaseholders and the local communities, especially within the Housing sector. It sets out how the council will work with tenants and leaseholders to comply with the regulatory framework and effectively prioritise council services. The strategy applies to current and future tenants and leaseholders and the people in the local communities to whom the council provides a service.

The asset management strategy supports this commitment and seeks to foster a sense of joint ownership through the continuous engagement of residents in the ongoing management of their homes. The methods of engagement are continually evolving and adapting to the needs of local communities. Current examples of engagement in asset management are:

- a panel of trained residents assist in the procurement of all asset management works and services contracts
- residents are engaged in the monitoring of major contracts
- a team of trained residents monitor the 'fit to let' standard of properties through void inspections
- all leaseholders are engaged ahead of any major investment works for their properties
- resident engagement sessions are held ahead of any major improvement projects
- colour and finish choices for major products such as kitchens, worktops, flooring or wall finishes are chosen by the Excellence Panel

Engaging residents in the requirements of their Tenancy Conditions is also an important priority to ensure resources address lifecycle replacement appropriately and are not diverted to tackle avoidable property damage or rectify unauthorised alterations.

During the consultation on this Asset Management Strategy, several themes emerged from residents, and these have been taken into consideration in forming this overall strategy. The key points raised were:

- Improved insulation and energy efficiency measures of council homes
- Consideration of electrical charging for vehicles
- Provision of homes that can accommodate modern living needs
- Homes that can be adapted for changing needs
- Improved outside communal areas

Engagement with Leaseholders

The housing portfolio includes over 900 leasehold properties. There are statutory requirements concerning the engagement of leaseholders and local aims to actively engage leaseholders in the ongoing management of the buildings in which they own properties. The council must charge leaseholders for the relevant portion of costs for capital works to their buildings, as set out in the terms of their lease.

Considering the impact of these costs, the council has put in place a number of payment options for leaseholders, with enhanced options for resident leaseholders.

In line with the Leasehold Reform Act 2002, the council will ensure the following:

- provide leaseholders with up-to-date information on investment plans before they purchase a property
- ensure Section 20 notices are issued on time and accompanied by frequently asked questions
- offer all leaseholders who are affected by major works costs the opportunity for individual appointments to discuss the planned works and individual payment options
- monitor the satisfaction of leaseholders with the works undertaken

Resident Satisfaction

Satisfaction surveys undertaken on behalf of the Housing service are conducted following HouseMark STAR methodology where possible, which is the leading satisfaction framework for the UK Housing sector.

The data used to measure satisfaction is collected on the council's behalf over the telephone with residents by a third-party independent research contractor that specialises in conducting satisfaction surveys for the Housing sector.

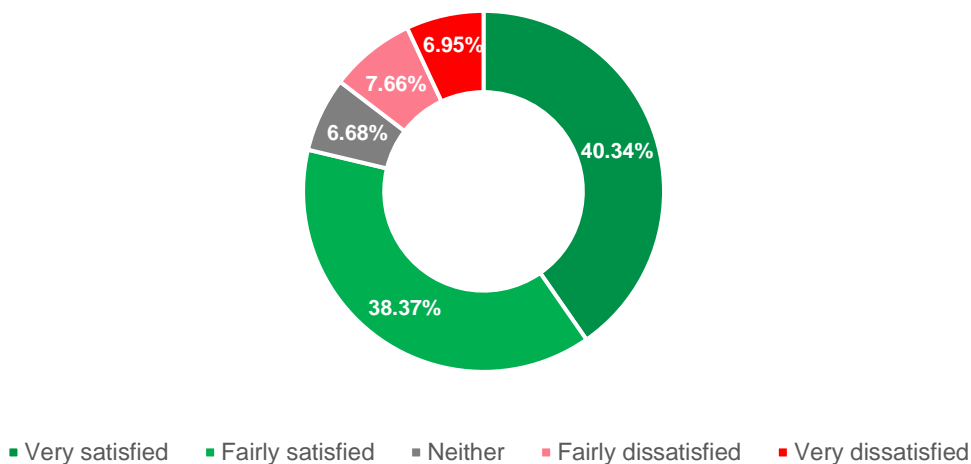
Both quantitative data in the form of ratings and qualitative data in free-text feedback are collected.

Satisfaction rates are calculated using the combined numbers of “very satisfied” or “excellent” and “fairly satisfied” or “good” ratings only.

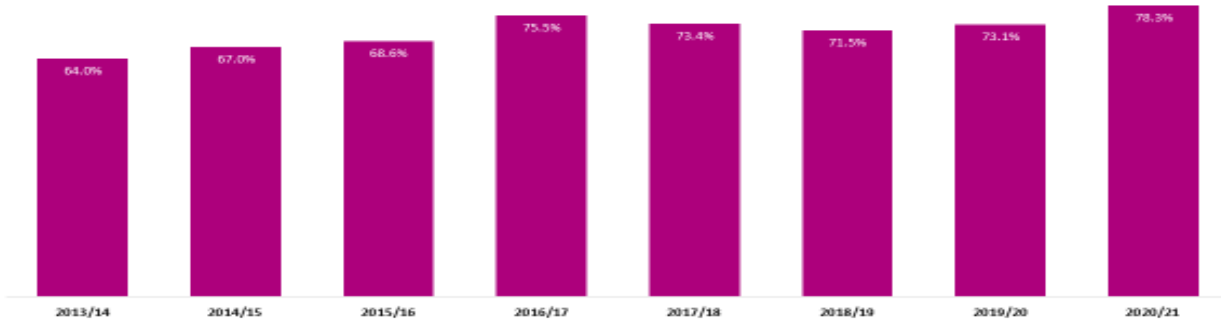
Tenant Satisfaction with Quality of Home

The data produced in 2020/2021 shows that over 78% of current Housing tenants are satisfied with the quality of their homes. Compared to previous years in the second chart, this shows an improvement in overall satisfaction.

Satisfaction With Quality Of Home



Tenant Satisfaction
Quality of their Home
 Comparison With Previous Years



For the year 2020/21, satisfaction was above 75% on all measures relating to the management of the building services. Themes from this feedback have been fully considered in forming this strategy alongside the feedback received from consultation with the Tenant Excellence Panel and the wider Housing Strategy consultation exercise.

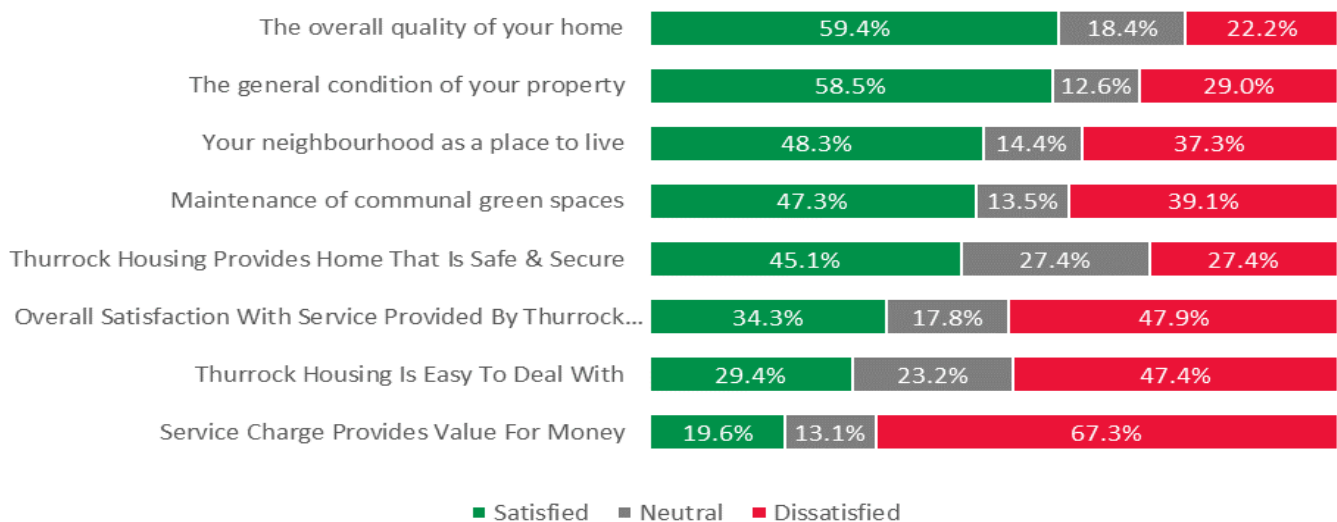
Leaseholder Satisfaction

Leaseholders are responsible for all repairs and maintenance within their properties, but the council are responsible for the management and maintenance of the external and communal aspects of the buildings.

Between July and October 2020, the housing service commissioned its satisfaction survey provider to facilitate a complete postal leaseholder satisfaction survey.

The survey indicated that leaseholders are less satisfied than tenants with the current service. All feedback from surveys, complaints and councillor enquiries is carefully analysed to identify learning and improvements in the delivery of these services with the aim of continuous improvement.

Satisfaction With Housing and Services



Housing Asset Management Strategy Aims and Objectives

This Strategy sets out the strategic principles to be applied for all future housing asset investment decisions.

It provides a framework to be applied when considering future options for investment in the housing assets, ensuring that they continue to offer quality and affordable homes for current and future residents.

The strategy demonstrates how the council’s housing portfolio will meet its priorities and sets the strategic direction for those involved in the day-to-day management of the stock and future housing asset investment decisions.

It responds to both the national and corporate priorities, and the feedback from our residents as set out above. Three core aims will ensure the properties continue to offer good quality homes for current and future residents at an affordable cost.



Deliver High-Quality Homes

We want our homes and estates to be places where residents enjoy living and working, where they take pride in their homes and can enjoy being part of a thriving community. We aim to provide high-quality accommodation that demonstrates the benefits of our repairs and capital investment programmes and positively influences the health and wellbeing of our tenants and residents.

Procurement and Social Value

Ensuring value for money is fundamental to delivering an Asset Management service and the procurement of asset management third party contracts, ensuring that there is always a consistent quality service. We will always consider a range of options to identify the most appropriate procurement and partnership arrangements considering cost certainty, quality and added value to the community, such as local employment, apprenticeships, training opportunities, and community grants and sponsorship.

We will adopt an outcome-based approach focused on the whole life value, performance, and cost to promote a shared focus on outcomes rather than scope, enabling innovation and driving continuous improvement.

We will develop long term plans for key asset programmes to drive greater value and, where applicable, pursue longer-term contract arrangements that make it economically viable for contractors to invest in new technologies and deliver improved products and efficiency savings and managed risk.

Social value maximises the benefits of public procurement by encouraging positive outcomes for the local communities. Every tender brief will include a clearly defined specification of social value expectations and required outcomes for local community commitments. These commitments will become part of the key contractual performance measures monitored through contract governance. All contractual Key Performance Indicators will be proportionate to the size and complexity of the project or programme.

Use of Smart Technology

The council will explore the use of smart environmental sensors to remotely monitor the temperature and humidity conditions of properties. This would enable the proactive identification of the need for remedial repairs. This will be considered where it can demonstrate efficiencies and improved service to residents.

Day to Day Repairs and Maintenance

The council will ensure the provision of effective and responsive day to day repairs and maintenance services that keep our properties in good repair while achieving high levels of resident satisfaction. The council's day to day housing repairs service is delivered through third-party contracts that deliver a responsive repairs service to all housing tenants in line with government and locally set standards and timeframes as set out in the Housing Repairs Policy.⁵

Resident Safety

The council will maintain a compliance regime that guarantees residents that their homes are well managed and meet all the required safety standards. This is provided through periodic risk

⁵ <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/housing-repairs-policy-v01.pdf>.

assessments and inspection and maintenance programmes. These work programmes are delivered through specialist third party contracts and apply to domestic and commercial gas supplies, passenger lifts, asbestos management, water hygiene, electrical supplies, fire safety systems, portable appliances and all other specialist plant and equipment.

We will ensure full compliance with the Building Safety Bill and the implementation of recommendations made from the Grenfell enquiry. This is in line with the Charter for Social Housing Residents, as set out in the Housing White Paper.

The council are committed to achieving 100% compliance with all applicable safety standards.

Fire Safety

The housing department maintains a fire safety policy that reflects the required approach to ensure that the council provide safe and secure housing. As noted previously within this document, the building and fire safety landscape has seen the biggest change in the last decade. The council must adapt appropriately to meet the requirements of the most recent and forthcoming regulations.

The Fire Safety Act 2021, the RRFSO 2005 and the Building Safety Bill place a specific legal duty on building owners. In 2021 the housing department created Building Safety Manager roles in readiness for these pending changes. This has allowed the council to compile building safety cases for "in scope" buildings with the housing portfolio. This new regulatory framework will also give power to the national regulators to judge the competence of an accountable officer such as the Building Safety Manager. The council is proactively taking forward the relevant training to ensure that appointed officers meet the proposed competency framework that will be part of the new legislation.

Governance in this area is strengthened further through regular business assurance reporting and the creation of the Tenant Scrutiny Board.

At the time of implementing this asset management strategy, the fire safety policy for the council's housing department 2021 is being reviewed and updated to ensure that it reflects all the required and emerging legislative documents and information.

Capital Investment

To ensure the integrity of the asset is maintained and that the council fulfils its duty to provide residents with affordable warmth in homes with future-proofed facilities, there is an ongoing need for capital investment.

The Housing Capital Programme, known as the Transforming Homes Programme, invests in the long-term integrity of the council's assets and brings significant improvements to the health and wellbeing of residents through improvements to their living conditions and reducing fuel poverty through improved energy efficiency.

Through this programme, the council will ensure a 'whole asset' approach is taken to ensure investment programmes offer value for money and deliver the best outcomes. To improve the sustainability and efficiency of the stock, it will integrate retrofit principles into asset investment planning to ensure a fabric first approach is taken.

Adapting Homes for Specific Needs

The council aims to meet the changing needs of current and potential residents by adapting existing properties and providing new accessible properties recognising that our older residents will increasingly want to:

- stay in control
- prepare in good time to step up to the next stage in their lives
- have a choice of homes that support their health and well-being

Within our existing properties, the council carry out adaptations to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities to enhance their lifestyle and, where appropriate, enable them to remain in their current home.

It is sometimes the case that the original beneficiary no longer requires adaptations. This equipment may be of use to another of the council's tenants. Adaptations are often expensive, so a register of adapted properties is maintained, enabling re-letting to a household with similar needs.

Product Specification and Standards

The focus for specifying products for use in the housing assets is quality over cost. The aim is to use products of sufficient quality to withstand day to day wear and tear with a minimum of ongoing maintenance. This reduces disruption to residents in their homes and contributes to the council's broader sustainability objectives providing value for money in the longer term.

Prevention of Damp and Mould

Damp and mould in social housing is an issue across the UK. It is widely recognised as one of the most challenging aspects for landlords and residents to prevent and manage. For this reason, the Housing Ombudsman undertook a thematic review and recently published a report on this subject.

The council is committed to the management and investment required to tackle and minimise cases of damp and mould within our residents' homes. It will work in line with the recommendations set out in the Housing Ombudsman report *Spotlight on damp and mould - It's not lifestyle*. It is recognised that it is not possible to fully eradicate the presence of damp and mould due to the multitude of factors that cause this. The Council will ensure a fully coordinated approach to the ongoing prevention and management of this problem.

New Development

All new development plans will follow a specific process to ensure they achieve the Housing Strategy Objectives:

This will include ensuring the Employers Requirements suite of documents sets the quality and operational standards, reflects current legislative and good practice requirements, and ensures ease of maintenance and repair in use.

- We will develop plans in close consultation with the council's planning and urban design services to ensure residential development proposals are appropriate in scale, use and density for the locality. We will ensure that they meet high standards of design quality, contribute to safer communities and placemaking, support priorities for sustainable transport and are reviewed early to identify impacts of local infrastructure.

Chapter 5 – Housing Asset Management Strategy Aims and Objectives

- Ensuring new homes meet required environmental and sustainability criteria, consider the cost of using durable and sustainable construction methods and components.
- Ensure new residential homes meet the needs of people with a range of physical disabilities through close collaboration with occupational therapy services
- Review the opportunity at a scheme-by-scheme level to take advantage of modern methods of construction, including modular construction methods
- Ensuring tenders for construction work evaluate and take account of contractor’s proposals for social value outcomes.
- Plans will follow a comprehensive member, resident and stakeholder engagement strategy to ensure residents are fully informed of development proposals and members have early sight of proposals that affect their constituents.
- Satisfaction surveys with new tenants will be undertaken 6 and 12 months after completion to identify areas of high satisfaction with new homes completed or areas for review and improvement.

What?	How?	Impact?
All investment programmes offer value for money to deliver positive and tangible outcomes	We will take a ‘whole asset’ approach considering the current and future use of assets	Residents will be assured that investment programmes offer value for money and deliver improvements to their living conditions
Provide consistent, reliable and fit-for-purpose repairs and planned maintenance services that meet legislative requirements	We will ensure that repairs and planned maintenance are completed in line with the council’s repairs policy, and service components regularly to extend their lifespan and reduce the need for reactive repairs	Residents will have access to a repairs service that responds promptly and appropriately, supporting a good quality of life in and around their home. We will achieve at least 85% resident satisfaction in the repairs and planned maintenance services
Be proactive in maintaining council-owned homes in order to achieve a good standard and mitigate the need for reactive repairs	<p>Identify properties requiring significant investment over the next five to ten years using detailed stock analysis and findings from the 2021/22 stock condition survey</p> <p>We will use this information to inform plans for planned and cyclical maintenance programmes to ensure properties are safe and comply with legislative requirements</p>	<p>Residents will live in well-maintained homes, benefitting from investment at the right time and reducing the disruption of responsive repairs due to the failure of components.</p> <p>We will achieve at least 85% resident satisfaction for capital investment programmes</p>

Chapter 5 – Housing Asset Management Strategy Aims and Objectives

What?	How?	Impact?
Develop a holistic approach to damp and mould in council-owned properties in order to significantly reduce occurrences	<p>Work in line with the recommendations set out in the Housing Ombudsman <i>Spotlight on damp and mould</i> report</p> <p>We will analyse the data from a stock condition survey undertaken in the winter months of 2021/22 to accurately picture any properties suffering from seasonal damp or mould problems</p> <p>Ensure a fully coordinated approach with partners to the ongoing prevention and management of damp and mould.</p> <p>Use sensors to remotely monitor the environment in home to proactively identify where preventative interventions are required</p>	<p>Residents will experience fewer instances of damp and mould in their properties</p> <p>Where instances of damp and mould do occur, residents will receive support free of the stigma and judgement traditionally associated with the term 'lifestyle' in the context of this issue</p>
Engage and listen to the views of residents and understand their priorities in order to design, develop and deliver stock improvement programmes that target the things that matter	Proactively engage with residents on their experiences of living in council-owned properties and their priorities for making homes fit for the future	Programmes designed to deliver on residents priorities. Improved resident satisfaction in the quality of their homes
We will refresh the council's housing development programme in order to identify new opportunities to provide more social homes for rent	<p>Deliver new homes as part of the council's housing development programme, championing high design and construction standards on new affordable housing projects</p> <p>Continue to identify and progress new sites for the programme pipeline with consideration of the range of delivery methods</p> <p>Undertake regular assessments of existing and emerging housing delivery options, relating both to construction and provision to ensure that the viability of any such opportunities can be understood and progressed as appropriate</p>	Residents will have greater access to good quality social housing across the borough as a result of increased supply
We will develop and build new properties in line with clear and consistent requirements in order to ensure high-quality homes are made available for local residents	<p>We will learn from all completed developments and changing regulatory and sustainability standards to inform and drive updated employers' requirements</p> <p>Apply and monitor employers' requirements for new build properties to ensure high operational and quality standards of new homes</p>	Residents benefit from the provision of new homes that are both fit for purpose and fit for the future. All new homes provided by the council meet mandated high standards

Maximise the Value of Assets

Council investments in existing housing stock needs to be continually reviewed to ensure maintenance programmes achieve the best outcomes for residents and maximise the asset's overall value. The aim is to ensure future reinvestment in properties that are well located, meet housing needs and are efficient to manage.

Much of the current housing stock is considered long-term sustainable; however, the council recognises that some property archetypes present challenges in ongoing maintenance and the living environment due to their age or build type.

The age of our stock is another factor. The council will consider carefully whether we can regenerate some of the housing assets or whether replacing them will deliver better long-term quality of homes for our residents.

There is, therefore, a need to undertake stock appraisals of these archetypes to inform recommendations for either further investment or redevelopment of those assets in the future. Complete stock options appraisals consider the need and demand, social, economic and neighbourhood sustainability factors and are designed to determine the potential options and, ultimately, a preferred course for intervention. Any significant decisions arising from appraisals of this nature are subject to Cabinet approval.

Appraisals may identify properties for which an alternative use might be more appropriate. These alternative uses may include using the land or housing assets to build additional homes to increase the number of council-owned/managed properties available of the type and quality needed and in areas where people want to live. Recommended interventions arising from the full appraisal of the performance of the asset can include:

- Re-designation or re-use of properties
- Remodelling of properties
- Infill development or whole site redevelopment
- Development on previously undeveloped or cleared land

What?	How?	Impact?
Implement a new asset management system to maintain accurate stock condition data, inform decisions from strategic planning through to operational delivery, and effectively direct housing investment for maintenance and improvement	<p>We will implement an integrated asset management system and load the 2021/22 stock condition survey results. This will form the foundation for investment modelling and the design of planned maintenance programmes and monitor compliance</p> <p>We will use technology to support the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of council asset. We will explore remote sensor solutions to enable real-time monitoring of stock condition</p>	<p>Residents will benefit from fiscally responsible improvements to living conditions</p> <p>Residents will experience improvements in the ability of the council to respond to and resolve maintenance and repair concerns.</p> <p>Remotely monitored sensors will enable remedial action to be arranged swiftly and proactively</p>

Chapter 5 – Housing Asset Management Strategy Aims and Objectives

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>Take a targeted approach to asset investment and regeneration in order to protect and maximise the value of housing assets</p>	<p>Undertake full stock appraisals of properties where archetypes continue to present challenges due to age or build type</p> <p>Ensure these appraisals consider need and demand and social, economic and neighbourhood sustainability factors</p> <p>Use this information to recommend future programmes of investment or estate redevelopment</p> <p>Take forward recommendations for asset interventions through the process set in the council's constitution</p>	<p>Residents will be assured that new developments offer value for money, are financially viable and deliver homes fit for the future</p>
<p>Embed resident engagement in investment programmes and estate regeneration in order to deliver projects that meet local needs</p>	<p>Work closely with our residents to understand their priorities, identify required estate improvements, and progress opportunities for new housing to transform and enhance neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Residents will have direct input, influence and opportunity to shape future council-owned developments and ensure that they meet their needs and priorities</p>
<p>Maximise the social value and investment in the local economy that can be derived from investment in both existing and new build housing assets</p>	<p>Ensure firm emphasis on this requirement throughout the tendering, contract management and programme development phases</p>	<p>Residents benefit from improved community assets, training and employment opportunities, and greater value for money from the delivery of substantial investment programmes</p>

Plan for a Sustainable Future

Carbon Neutral Commitment

In October 2019, the council passed a motion to declare a climate emergency and to take urgent action to reduce its carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030. The council has committed to reducing its carbon footprint to zero. The council's initial plans to respond to the climate crisis is by making sure the council's operations are carbon neutral by 2030.

Over 34% of all emissions in the UK are attributed to the provision of heat. Shifting away from the use of fossil fuels and installing new renewable technologies for heating and hot water needs is a key part of the government's strategy for achieving net-zero carbon by 2050. Ground-source or air source heat pumps provide a solution to fully decarbonise heating in social housing assets coupled with clean energy. The installation of the low carbon heating systems is expected to provide a 70%+ reduction in carbon emissions.

The council is committed to continually investing in improving the overall thermal efficiency of homes whilst effectively supporting the borough's most vulnerable residents out of fuel poverty. This strategy supports the decarbonisation agenda while improving the overall energy efficiency of the assets, ensuring the homes provide affordable thermal comfort.

To achieve this, the council will review the performance of the existing housing assets and identify a range of appropriate interventions for the various property archetypes within the borough. The council will ensure all investment schemes follow the PAS 2035 approach. We will integrate retrofit works into all asset investment plans taking a fabric first approach to ensure they achieve the best outcomes value.

Significant investment will be required to meet the carbon reduction targets. A report Decarbonising the Housing Sector published by Savills in October 2021 estimated average costs of £24,250 per flat and £37,060 per 3-bed house would be required to meet the requirements. Therefore, it is clear that this will far exceed the funds available in the HRA business plan. Therefore the council will seek to maximise available funding streams to support the significant investment required. In order to do this, the council will therefore develop an opportunity overview of funding streams and ensure schemes are 'bid ready.'

The council will also work with suppliers to reduce their carbon footprint, considering carbon emissions when procuring contracts.

Electric Vehicles - Charging Points

Electric Vehicle (EV) ownership is growing quickly, and the council is working to ensure that it is as convenient as possible to transition to an EV.

Thurrock Council intends to focus on specific local areas of high pollution by providing an accessible network of electric vehicle charging points that will play a vital role in facilitating the uptake of electric vehicles and is a necessity to meet these Air Quality targets.

Tenants of street properties who require electric charging points are able to request permission for an alteration to their property to ensure any installation meets the council's required standards.

The council's housing service will work to complement the corporate plans for EV charging across the borough. It will consider the needs of specific sheltered sites or housing estates alongside this. Where there is a perceived need, residents will be consulted in order to assess the expected

requirements. The council will seek funding opportunities to support the cost of a programme of this nature.

Green Spaces

The importance of access to green spaces for exercise and mental wellbeing is vital for those without private gardens.

It is crucial for all communities, including those in social housing, and for all age groups to access a range of open and green spaces for leisure, recreation and play. These spaces should be well defined, easily accessible and safe with high-quality landscaping, including trees where appropriate, to support the physical health and wellbeing of all.

As part of this strategy, the housing development team will ensure that new developments improve access to green spaces for leisure, recreation, and play.

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>Increase the use of sustainable and renewable technology in new and existing stock in order to improve thermal efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and support the council's green agenda</p>	<p>We will support the shift away from the use of fossil fuels by installing new, renewable technologies for heating and hot water needs in new developments</p> <p>We will reduce carbon emissions in the new build developments by installing renewable energy sources, using well-insulated materials in the new homes, fitting LED lights and installing efficient communal heating and hot water systems</p> <p>We will select components and design and build new homes that meet sustainability standards and support the council's carbon reduction aims</p> <p>We will replace the electric storage radiators to 273 properties in three high rise blocks to provide a more efficient heating system linked to a ground source heat pump</p> <p>We will work with the council's suppliers and partners to reduce their carbon footprint, considering carbon emissions and contributions towards achieving net-zero when undertaking procurement activity</p>	<p>Residents will live in new and existing homes that have higher levels of thermal and energy efficiency, leading to reduced household costs relating to energy bills and more effective heating and lighting systems that are fit for the future</p>
<p>We will maximise the use of available funding in order to deliver thermal efficiency and carbon reduction improvements beyond the funding capacity of the Housing Revenue Account</p>	<p>We will develop an opportunity overview of funding streams and ensure schemes are developed that are 'bid ready'</p>	<p>Residents benefit from investment in their homes and neighbourhoods that may otherwise have been undeliverable, with a significantly reduced impact on existing programmed investments through the Housing Revenue Account</p>

Chapter 5 – Housing Asset Management Strategy Aims and Objectives

What?	How?	Impact?
<p>We will support residents out of fuel poverty in order to improve health and wellbeing, and quality of life</p>	<p>We will achieve EPC band C ratings across all housing stock by 2030 through direct investment in council homes from the housing revenue account and maximising the use of available funding streams</p> <p>Officers and partners undertake fuel poverty awareness training and are provided with the tools and knowledge to best support residents</p> <p>We will develop a sustainability profile of housing assets in order to identify and prioritise assets for improvement</p>	<p>Residents will benefit from proactive intervention, significant investment and access support to improve the thermal and energy efficiency of their homes, removing the harm to health and wellbeing of cold homes and fuel poverty</p>

Risk Management

Evaluation of risk is an essential part of effective asset management. Major decisions taken about the future use of the asset base in the absence of risk assessment may have a long-term detrimental effect on the sustainability of communities and the financial viability of the business plan.

Developing and maintaining a Housing Asset Management Strategy and carrying out the associated action plans on time demonstrates that the council effectively manages its risk of non-compliance across its property assets. When property decisions are made decisively, eliminating a siloed approach, and taken from a strategic perspective, they create the best outcomes for the council financially, for its staff and most importantly, its residents.

The main strategic risks and constraints are identified below:

- **Achieving Net Zero** – The strategy establishes the long-term vision and responds to the council’s ambitious net-zero targets. It is recognised that this requires significant investment and available expertise. The ability to deliver requires the council to successfully secure external grant funding.
- **Capacity and expertise** – The council will need a specific organisational focus to implement some of the identified themes. Additional technical expertise is required in the Asset management team to support bidding for grant funding and achievement of sustainability. Additional resources will also need to be procured in the capital programme to ensure that the quality of delivery is managed effectively.
- **Financial certainty** – The ability to develop accurate cost projections is fundamental to the effectiveness of the HRA business plan.
- **Organisational resilience** – It is essential that organisational resilience is developed with a suitable skill base to allow for the long-term implementation of the strategy and that training and development programmes are implemented to support staff retention and succession planning.

This strategy recognises that housing assets can also become liabilities, threatening the viability of the HRA and significantly impacting residents' lives, carrying the following risks:

- Failure to manage Health and Safety compliance could put residents, staff and contractors at risk.
- Failure to meet statutory standards can carry significant criminal and financial penalties and damage the organisation's reputation.
- Poor quality stock investment will be a key driver of satisfaction levels.
- Poor value for money in asset management will significantly impact council finances as this represents a considerable proportion of business plan spend.
- Internal and external factors impact expenditure, making it the element of landlord operations most vulnerable to increased costs.

Regular processes to identify and assess risks are in place, and actions are agreed to manage risks to minimise impact

Monitoring, Measuring and Review

We will implement a robust monitoring and review process to measure progress against the strategic priorities presented in this document.

Firstly, an action plan will be developed, aligned with the priorities and themes of this strategy, developed alongside residents and other key stakeholders with reviews undertaken at regular intervals.

It is intended that progress towards the delivery of this action plan will be monitored on an annual basis by an established group of residents and the Housing Strategies Delivery Board.

Throughout the lifespan of this strategy, there is an expectation that new actions will be added to the action plan, reacting to changes in external factors (such as legislation) or proactively if an opportunity to do so arises. These additions will be managed appropriately and will ensure that they continue to reflect the key themes of this strategy.

Appendix A – HRA Business Plan

Investment in Existing Stock	2022/23 Base Budget	2023/24 Base Budget	2024/25 Base Budget	2025/26 Base Budget	2026/27 Base Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Transforming Homes	10,300	10,300	10,300	10,300	10,300
Disabled Adaptations	100				
Major Adaptations	200	200	200	200	200
Fire Safety Works	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Tower Block Refurbishment	8,137	0	0	0	0
Carbon Reduction Requirements (Tower blocks)	4,700	0	2,250	2,750	5,500
Non-Traditional Refurbishment	3,500	0	0	0	0
HRA Garages	500	500	500	500	500
Heating Replacement Programme	600	600	600	600	600
Lifts Refurbishment	190	190	190	190	190
Door Entry Installation	500	500	500	500	500
Water Mains	160	160	160	160	160
Staffing Costs Capital Programme	160	160	160	160	160
Highways and Lighting	400	400	300	300	300
Carbon Reduction Requirements External	300	2,000	2,000	2,000	1,954
Electrical infrastructure testing - Check Revenue implications	500	250	250		
Total Capital Programme	31,247	16,260	18,410	18,660	21,364
<u>Financed By:</u>					
RCCO	(10,719)	(11,046)	(11,307)	(11,574)	(11,847)
Carbon funding bid	(3,210)				
Borrowing Requirement	17,318	5,214	7,103	7,086	9,517
Borrowing Cost @ 2.2% interest	381	115	156	156	209
<u>Cumulative Interest Cost</u>	840	955	1,111	1,267	1,476

5 August 2022	ITEM: 6
Health and Wellbeing Board	
The Health and Wellbeing of Children Looked After – A Health Needs Assessment for Thurrock	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: None
Report of: Elozona Umeh, Senior Public Health Programme Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Andrea Clement, Assistant Director of Public Health.	
Accountable Director: Jo Broadbent, Director of Public Health	
This report is	

Executive Summary

Children and young people looked after (CLA) and care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group with greater health and social needs than their peers. Looked-after children and young people in the UK are children and young people in the care of the local authority, either voluntarily or subject to a care order made by court to grant shared parental responsibility with a local authority ('in care').

The 2017 annual report of the Director of Public Health on the [Sustainability of Children's Social Care](#) considered the pressures on the social care system, how the number of children in the social care system can be reduced, and presented the financial opportunities available to reduce the number of children within the system. Following this, it was imperative to systematically review the health and wellbeing needs of CLA. The report sought to further our understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of CLA, engage with CLA to capture their lived experiences, including experiences of foster carers and professionals working with CLA.

Findings from this work informed recommendations using knowledge gathered through data analysis of CLA and care leavers' demographic profile, service description and examination of the published evidence base, and a commissioned piece of engagement to explore the lived experience of Thurrock CLA.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **The Board consider, comment and endorse the Children Looked After Needs Assessment for Thurrock.**

1.2 That the Board approve publication of this needs assessment in line with other Joint Strategic Needs Assessments for Thurrock

1.3 The Board support the delivery of its recommendations through the Thurrock robust areas of work for CLA.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The CLA cohort includes children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). For the purposes of this needs assessment we have referred to children and young people as the population of Thurrock aged 0 -19 or up to 25 years if they have SEND or are receiving an aftercare service

2.2 The objectives of the Needs Assessment are to:

- Capture the lived experiences of CLA, foster carers and professionals caring for CLA.
- To systematically understand the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people looked after and care leavers.
- Understand what the published evidence base tells us works to support CLA and care leavers.

2.3 The report provides an overall summary of the local and national context for CLA as well as the risks and protective factors that predispose or prevent children from being taken into care or help stabilise children while in care. Intelligence has been drawn to understand the health and wellbeing needs of CLA and care leavers and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to services and outcomes. Recommended actions have equally been captured.

2.4 There were 301 CLA as of 31 March 2021. This is equivalent to a rate of 66 CLA per 10,000 children under the age of 18 which is similar to England and our Statistical Neighbours (SN) but higher than the regional average. As at March 2022, unpublished data shows the number of CLA were 295 equating to a rate of 65 per 10,000 population. The rate of children in care in Thurrock declined between 2016 and 2019, from 81 CLA per 10,000 children under the age of 18 in 2016 to 67 CLA per 10,000 in 2020 and has remained stable since. At the end of March 2021, 286 Care Leavers (compared to 254 in March 2020), including those 16-18 being supported, were receiving an Aftercare Service. This is a slight increase from March 2019 but this is largely dependent on the age of children in care.

2.5 In December 2020, **281 Care Leavers** were being supported and were receiving an aftercare service, an increase from the previous year. This increase may be attributed to legislation that came into place in 2017 which enable care leavers to request support services up to the age of 25. CLA and care leavers have varying needs depending on their characteristics including gender, age and ethnicity.

2.6 In Thurrock:

- Well over half of children in care are male; 62% compared to 38% female.
- A larger proportion of children looked after are between the ages of 12 and 16 (44%) with the second largest group being the 5–11-year-olds (24%).
- There is a strong positive association between ward level deprivation and the rate of CLA in each ward in Thurrock with children living in the most deprived area of Thurrock being 4.3 times more likely to be taken into care than those living in the least deprived area of the borough.
- The difference in the percentage of pupils achieving a 9-4 pass in Maths and English at KS4 between CLA and the general pupil population in Thurrock was nearly three-fold, where CLA averaged 23.3% and the general population averaged 61%. However, performance against national CLA cohorts is positive for Thurrock.
- It is good practice to ensure that children remain within their communities. The percentage of CLA children placed within 20 miles of their home address increased by one percentage point, up to 71% between March 2020 and March 2021. This was slightly lower than both SNs (73%) and England (74%) during the same period.
- The fostering recruitment campaign seeks to increase local placements. However, Thurrock along with other authorities across the country are finding the recruitment of local foster carers a challenge. Local placements are scarce, both from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) and Residential care homes. The local authority continues to seek Ofsted registered provision and sometimes this is outside of the Thurrock and Essex area.
- According to the Stability Index, over a 24-month period ending in 2017/18 (the most recent data at the time of writing), 49% of CLA in Thurrock had experienced at least one placement change, 3% had experienced at least one school move and 77% had experienced at least one change in social worker. Based on these three stability domains, schools appear to be a more stable environment for CLA.
- The majority of Thurrock Care Leavers are in suitable accommodation. In 2020/21, 86% of care leavers who were in suitable accommodation, 19% were not in touch with the local authority and 9% were recorded as living in unsuitable accommodation. Most care leavers who were not in suitable accommodation were either in custody or missing UASC (**see section 5.4.1 of the extended CLA HNA for further details**).
- The Social Survey Division of the Office for National Statistics estimated that 45% of CLA aged 5-17 years would normally have a diagnosable mental health disorder (Healthy London Partnership, 2020). This equates to approximately **134 (out of 298)** CLA aged 5-17 with a diagnosable mental health disorder in

Thurrock in 2021. Although there is no estimated prevalence for Care Leavers, a similar prevalence rate would lead to a figure of **126 (out of 281)** Care Leavers who may have a diagnosable mental health disorder in Thurrock. Similarly, within the general child population, 16% (one in six) children and young people (aged 5-16 years) were identified as having a probable mental disorder increasing from one in nine (10.8%) in 2019 (NHS Digital, 2020). There is a need to ensure that mental health information is used for service and transition planning, in order to improve services offered by adjust them to children’s mental health needs

- Children looked after accounted for 20% of statutory outcomes in 2020-21. This has slightly reduced to 18% for 2021-22. However, the cohort numbers fewer than 10 in the latest data and more than half of these children are looked after because of Youth Detention Accommodation/remand. This means that CLA status became active as a direct result of their offending.
- Thurrock Youth Offending Team, Essex Police and Thurrock Social Care continue to work together to divert young people away from the criminal justice system via its Out of Court Disposal Panel. It is expected that this will reduce the number of CLA After receiving statutory outcomes as it provides voluntary interventions and support for children committing low level offences.

2.7 The infographic below provides a summary of the engagement responses received (appendix 1).

2.8 **Recommendations**

A series of recommendations are made within the needs assessment report based on this findings to be delivered through an action plan within existing CLA governance structures.

Key Finding	Recommendation
<u>A.- Risks associated with CLA</u>	
Positive association between deprivation and the chances of going into care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LA should evaluate the Signs of Safety and research in practice approaches in achieving secure attachment, in line with NICE Guidance in order to ensure exposure to risk is adequately identified
Risk of placement under household with exposure to, or experiences of ACEs and/or Toxic Trio*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy to apply evidence-based interventions which reduce ACEs (see further recommendation below) • Interventions should be offered at universal, selected, and targeted levels as a way to address personal, familial, and environmental risk factors and the wider determinants of health.

Key Finding	Recommendation
<p>To improve the understanding and identification of vulnerability risk factors experienced by parents and households</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s and adult mental health services should foster more collaboration between teams • Refining and strengthening the pathway for identification of ACES and/or Toxic Trio* through the Multiagency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Adult Mental Health pathways.
<p><u>B.- Engagement with CLA, Foster Carers and Professionals</u></p>	
<p>CLA reported experiencing three or more social worker changes in a year, contributing to the negative experiences they had whilst in care and reflected within the stability index estimates of social worker changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social care turnover in Thurrock should be reviewed to identify opportunities to reduce turnover and improve care experiences and stability. Children’s Social care should continue to initiate steps towards achieving this outcome by conducting benchmarking and a deep dive to understand reasons/local picture and to identify mitigation options. • • A system-wide deep dive could take into consideration examples of good practice from other Local Authorities . Responsibility for this could reside with the CLA Steering Group.
<p>CLA are entitled to an advocate who will assist in conveying their wishes to professionals. Thurrock CLA who participated in the engagement process lacked awareness of advocacy services available to them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan to increase understanding, access to and use of advocacy services in order to shape and align the advocacy service into an offer that serves CLA needs
<p>Majority of Foster Carers reported needing help with their health and wellbeing (especially MH) and support in preparing CLA for adulthood or leaving care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with foster carers on their health and wellbeing through their supervisory social worker – targeted awareness on available wellbeing offer as well as during induction activities. • Engage both in-house and private foster carers in the planning transition to adulthood – a quick win will be to incorporate this within foster carers training/induction
<p>Professionals reported that access to mental health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the support from clinical supervisor to the foster care community and ensure there is

<p>services is an area that needs more focus</p>	<p>provision through Southend, Essex and Thurrock CAMHS to support care of CLA. This may require further exploration of need and how this can be met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage CLA and care leavers in participation programmes to improve their emotional and mental wellbeing - For example, the survey conducted by the Healthy London Partnership of mental health services for CLA and Care Leavers .
<p>Key Finding</p>	<p>Recommendation</p>
<p align="center"><u>C.- Health and Wellbeing</u></p>	
<p>The Initial Health Assessment (IHA) is a key opportunity to identify the health needs of any child or young person in care, in order to achieve and protect their wellbeing. IHAs have a statutory timeframe of 20 working days. However, in Thurrock and between 01 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 just 57% IHAs had been performed in time.</p>	
<p>Access to the EWMHS service is prioritised for CLA through a triage process however, there is insufficient data on categories of concerns recorded for CLA</p>	<p>Engage CLA and care leavers in participation programmes to improve their emotional and mental wellbeing. <i>An option for consideration could potentially be the survey conducted by the Healthy London Partnership of mental health services for CLA and Care leavers.</i></p>
<p>There is a gap in our knowledge of the extent of sexual health need in CLA and Care leavers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sexual Health Service - commissioners and provider should work to enhance local data recording & collecting procedures to inform understanding regarding the uptake and usage of the Sexual Health service by CLA and Care Leavers. This should highlight gaps in provision and relevant adaptations. The sexual health service should work in a way that ensures age-appropriate information is available to young people in care either through the local offer website or the NHS App. This should be considered within the next re-procurement of the Sexual Health Service.
<p>Further improvements are needed to increase the proportion of CLA having dental checks each year to 90% (from 82% in 2020) and their outcomes. (Department of Education, 2021)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise a training package of early intervention in collaboration with OHID for foster carers and other main caregivers of CLA to promote good oral health based on consistent evidence. There is also an opportunity to co-produce questions for assessing effective ways to support CLA, foster carers to better access

	<p>dental health checks during the proposed annual or bi-annual CLA engagement activity</p>
<p>CLA uptake of childhood immunisations does not meet the recommended national immunisation coverage. Although data on up-to-date immunisation status for CLA are now in line with England average this is still not comparable with the general population.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and regional strategic plans for increasing immunisation uptake should include CLA as a vulnerable group of interest. An audit of the immunisation status of all CLA and care leavers in Thurrock should be conducted to confirm uptake is up-to-date. Capture data collected through the Healthy Families commissioned services on immunisation uptake for CLA
<p>Exploring categories of offences CLA groups engage in, collating appropriate information enable tailored interventions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's Services should continue to review and undertake benchmarking analysis of this data to further understand the type of criminal offences young people in care have been involved in, and with partners identify opportunities for preventative action in line with the Annual Public Health Report 2019.
<p>The Virtual School provides support to CLA to ensure there is a focus on closing the gap between the percentage of general pupils and CLA achieving a 9-4 pass in Maths and English at KS4. However, performance against national CLA cohorts is positive for Thurrock</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key professionals, including the virtual school service, should continue to conduct a detailed analysis of CLA's educational experiences and form an action plan to close the gap in educational outcomes between CLA and the general school pupil population in Thurrock. This analysis could be achieved through the proposed annual engagement programme with Children Looked After in conjunction with the Corporate Parenting Committee.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 These are set out in detail in the needs assessment report included as an appendix.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The needs of Children Looked After have been identified in a robust way within;

- a descriptive analysis of the demography and the service offer in Thurrock,
- a commissioned piece of engagement process, consulting with Thurrock Children Looked After, Foster carers and professionals to provide in depth understanding to their lived experiences of being in care and working within areas supporting CLA
- a review of the published evidence base and comparison of good practice in other areas,

4.2 Growing up in adverse socioeconomic conditions can have a significant impact on children's lives and is a risk factor that has been associated with child abuse and neglect. Poverty, unemployment and parental financial stress are recognised as contributory causal factors for children being taken into care.

4.3 By identifying the lived experiences of CLA and reviewing their outcomes, this needs assessment proposes a series of actions to address the issues and challenges experienced by CLA and care leavers. Recommendations made within this needs assessment are aligned to local place transformation.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 A variety of stakeholders contributed to this needs assessment including professionals directly involved in the care of children looked after. The detailed report has been presented and approved at Public Health Leadership Team (September, 2021) and is on the forward plan to be presented at the Brighter Futures Child Health Group.

5.2 Consultation with CLA, foster carers and professionals has taken place through the engagement exercise commissioned from Health Watch that formed part of the needs assessment process (see section 9 of the detailed report). A summary of the responses is also included in the needs assessment document in appendix 2 submitted as appendix 1 to this report.

5.3 The engagement exercise focussed on the lived experiences of CLA, foster carers and professionals in Thurrock, using surveys and taking a thematic analysis approach to collating the responses. The recommendations are incorporated in section 9 of the needs assessment report.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The report contributes towards the ‘People’ priority – *a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay*, as the recommendations support improvement in the health and wellbeing of CLA.
- building on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing; and
 - communities being empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together.
- 6.2 The recommendations also contribute towards the [Thurrock Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26 Domain 1 and 4](#): Staying Healthier for Longer and Opportunity for All
- 6.3 The recommendations also contribute towards the Brighter Futures Strategy priorities:
- i) **Strategic Priority 1:** All children are able to achieve their potential, focusing on education and skills
 - ii) **Strategic Priority 2:** Children are able to access the services they need to stay healthy
 - iii) **Strategic Priority 4:** Children and their families experience good emotional health and wellbeing

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall**
Senior Management Accountant

Any specific investment decisions arising from the recommendations in this report would be subject to the approval of a detailed business case to the appropriate senior leadership team. This will be reviewed in line with the financial allocation process within the council and partner agencies.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Petrena Sharpe**
Safeguarding Lawyer -Team Leader

Under Section 116 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (as amended by the Health and Social Care act 2012) the Local Authority and CCG must prepare a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The government produced statutory guidance in 2013 on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment can be undertaken in a manner appropriate to local circumstances and can be informed by more detailed needs assessments such as those which relate to specific parts of the community.

Where a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has been prepared the Local Authority and CCG must prepare a strategy or plan of action to meet those needs under Section 116A of the 2007 Act.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

Growing up in adverse socioeconomic conditions can have a significant impact on children's lives and is a risk factor that has been associated with child abuse and neglect. Poverty, unemployment and parental financial stress are recognised as contributory causal factors for children being taken into care.

A diversity of socio economic status exists in Thurrock with varying rates of child poverty observed. The report also highlights evidence that children living in the most deprived areas of the borough are more likely to become looked after.

Any potential increase in the rates of children looked after in Thurrock alongside other poor outcomes they experience has the potential to widen the gap in health inequalities and life expectancy.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

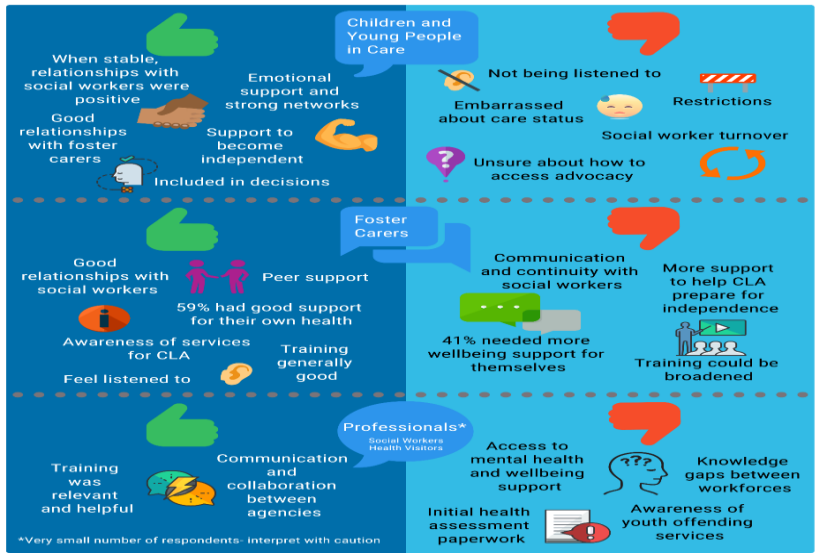
Recommendations within the needs assessment report should contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of Children Looked After, care leavers in Thurrock and reduce the inequalities they may face.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Detailed references are given in the main Needs Assessment available on request. This summary report details a concise version of the main report.

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Children Looked After Needs Assessment for Thurrock, October 2021
- CLA Engagement Infographics



Report Author:

Elozona Umeh

Senior Public Health Programme Manager (Children)

Public Health

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The Health and Wellbeing of Children Looked After

A Health Needs Assessment for Thurrock - A Summary -

Authors

Elozona Umeh, Senior Public Health Programme Manager

Juliet Brabben, Public Health Graduate Trainee

Karen Balthasar, Public Health Graduate Trainee

Editors:

Teresa Salami-Oru, Assistant Director for Public Health

Elozona Umeh, Senior Public Health Programme Manager

Contributors:

This health needs assessment has been made possible thanks to the valuable contributions from a range of colleagues involved in supporting children looked after and care leavers. With particular thanks to the following individuals;

Anna Watkins and colleagues within Children's Services Business Intelligence Service, Hannah Celia and the Xantura team, Health Watch, Katie Powers, Public Health Graduate Trainee, Naintara Khosla – Strategic Lead Children Looked After, North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT) – Data Team, Maria Payne – Strategic Lead – Public Mental Health & Adult Mental Health Systems Transformation, Philip Gregory, Senior Public Health Manager – Health Intelligence, Smita Nagmoti – Specialty Registrar in Public Health Thurrock CCG

This needs assessment also features the views and experiences of Children Looked After and their carers. Our thanks to the **66 Children and Young People who are looked after, 19 foster carers and 15 professionals** who participated in the engagement exercise to obtain information on their views about being in care or caring for children and young people who are in care

The extended version of this needs assessment is available on request. This needs assessment was written pre-covid with an update with an update to the data and information in 2021. The data contained within this needs assessment is varied and reflective of available data at the time of writing.

Executive Summary

Children and young people looked after (CLA), and care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group with potentially greater health and social needs than their peers. CLA have long been viewed as one of the most vulnerable populations in society, facing inequalities in health, education and social factors that are harmful to their health and wellbeing outcomes, and ultimately their life potential and fulfilment.

Evidence shows that certain Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are commonly linked to children entering the care system and increase the chances of poor health outcomes later on in life. ACE include verbal, physical and sexual abuse; emotional and physical neglect; household challenges including mental illness, domestic violence, problem drug and alcohol use, parental incarceration and parental separation. Both chronic stress and increased health damaging behaviour which relieves this stress such as smoking, substance abuse and sexual risk-taking, can be associated with poor physiological development and experience of multiple ACEs.

As a result, there are some children who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to live with their parent/s. In such circumstances, children or young people, may either enter into care through voluntary means or through a court order which enables the local authority to take on corporate parenting responsibilities to safeguard them. These children then become Children Looked After (CLA).

Care Leavers (CLs) are young people who have been cared for by the Local Authority and are on a path to transition into adulthood towards independent living with the option of accessing the support of the Local Authority care leaving services until age 25.

This co-produced needs assessment was undertaken as part of Thurrock Public Health's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) work programme. It utilised intelligence from several sources to understand need at a point in time, create a narrative and make recommendations. A literature review from published evidence was conducted to understand the burden of health and wellbeing issues and risk-taking behaviours among CLA and Care Leavers (CLs). Local data was gathered to identify needs and the service offer across Thurrock. The JSNA should be read in conjunction with the Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy, which provides context to the population of Thurrock and the cohort of CLA and Aftercare children and young people. Lastly, an engagement exercise, in the form of a survey through Healthwatch, was conducted with CLA, carers and professionals who work with them in Thurrock to gather their views. A series of recommendations were drawn from this detailed analysis of needs, and which are listed at the end of this summary.

What we know about our CLA, Care Leavers and local services

Nationally, the prevalence of CLA has been increasing year on year. Although Thurrock has had a larger number of children in care than comparator local authorities, this has now stabilised from 2018 and is currently in line with national and comparator local authorities.

The CLA cohort includes children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). For the purposes of this needs assessment, we have referred to children and young people as the population of Thurrock aged 0 -17 or up to 25 years if they have SEND or are receiving an aftercare service.

There were **301 CLA as of 31 March 2021**. This is equivalent to a rate of **66 CLA per 10,000** children under the age of 18 which is similar to England and our Statistical Neighbours (SN) but higher than the regional average. **As at March 2022, unpublished data shows the number of CLA were 295 equating to a rate of 65 per 10,000 population** The rate of children in care in Thurrock declined between 2016 and 2019, from 81 CLA per 10,000 children under the age of 18 in 2016 to 67 CLA per 10,000 in 2020 and has remained stable since. **At the end of March 2021, 286 Care Leavers (compared to 254 in March 2020)**, including those 16-18 being supported, were receiving an Aftercare Service. This is a slight increase from March 2019 but this is largely dependent on the age of children in care.

From August 2020 to February 2021 during international Covid restrictions, there had been a reduced number of UASC, but that trend reversed to reach as high as 33 UASC by September 2021. The number of UASC who were open at the end of each month has increased since September 2021, equating to 11% of the total CLA cohort. This is above the Thurrock ceiling of 0.07% and the allocated number of 31 UASC. There has been a reduction in this number since March 2022 (Thurrock Council Children Looked After Monthly Profile, 2022). While the new National Transfer Scheme is in place, the Eastern Region transfers are currently paused. However, there are negotiations with the Home Office to ensure that Thurrock does not accept further UASC entrants aiding effective transfers to other local authorities.

CLA and care leavers have varying needs depending on their characteristics including gender, age and ethnicity. Understanding this demography can facilitate identification of needs and approaches for effective support. Most of the above information and the data included within this report can be found on the government website (Department of Education, 2021). In Thurrock:

- Well over half of children in care are male; 62% compared to 38% female.
- A larger proportion of children looked after are between the ages of 12 and 16 (44%) with the second largest group being the 5–11-year-olds (24%).
- There is a strong positive association between ward level deprivation and the rate of CLA in each ward in Thurrock with children living in the most deprived area of Thurrock being 4.3 times more likely to be taken into care than those living in the least deprived area of the borough.

- The difference in the percentage of pupils achieving a 9-4 pass in Maths and English at KS4 between CLA and the general pupil population in Thurrock was nearly three-fold, where CLA averaged 23.3% and the general population averaged 61%. However, performance against national CLA cohorts is positive for Thurrock.
- It is good practice to ensure that children remain within their communities. The percentage of CLA children placed within 20 miles of their home address increased by one percentage point, up to 71% between March 2020 and March 2021. This was slightly lower than both SNs (73%) and England (74%) during the same period.
- The fostering recruitment campaign seeks to increase local placements. However, Thurrock along with other authorities across the country are finding the recruitment of local foster carers a challenge. Local placements are scarce, both from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) and Residential care homes. The local authority continues to seek Ofsted registered provision and sometimes this is outside of the Thurrock and Essex area.
- According to the Stability Index, over a 24-month period ending in 2017/18 (the most recent data at the time of writing), 49% of CLA in Thurrock had experienced at least one placement change, 3% had experienced at least one school move and 77% had experienced at least one change in social worker. Based on these three stability domains, schools appear to be a more stable environment for CLA.
- The majority of Thurrock Care Leavers are in suitable accommodation. In 2020/21, 86% of care leavers who were in suitable accommodation, 19% were not in touch with the local authority and 9% were recorded as living in unsuitable accommodation. Most care leavers who were not in suitable accommodation were either in custody or missing UASC (**see section 5.4.1 of the extended CLA HNA for further details**).
- Between 2017 and 2019 there was a 13% increase in Care Leavers accessing Education Employment and Training (EET) opportunities. This was a positive change for Thurrock which suggests that opportunities for care leavers to progress into work and further education had improved. However, COVID-19 has impacted negatively on the progress that was made in Thurrock, with the decrease of young people entering EET during the pandemic. Opportunities are being followed up to ensure that post-lockdown, Care Leavers are supported to access EET opportunities. For instance:
 1. There is a close alignment between the Aftercare Service and the Inspire Youth Hub, a partnership which aims to bring about improvements in the number of young people in education, employment and training. The On-Track Thurrock Programme continues to offer a bespoke programme to ensure that Care Leavers can access education, employment and training. The offer of one-to-one in-person support from the Inspire Hub is

continuing (subject to risk assessment) for both emotional wellbeing and employment advice. Thurrock offers access to the Prince's Trust programme, which enables young people to build their confidence and have access to apprenticeship opportunities so they can engage in the local communities in which they live.

2. The government Kickstart programme in Thurrock is spearheaded by Inspire; the programme provides funding to create new 6-month placements for 16–24 year-olds on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. The government's Plan for Jobs scheme is hoped to create new jobs. Employers are funded to pay the salaries and National Insurance contributions for each young person's placement, up to 25 hours per week. Additional funding is available to support each young person to understand the skills that employers need and how to use this opportunity as a platform into sustainable employment. DWP is the conduit for young people referrals and reimbursement for wages. There is agreement for the funding application for the recruitment of up to 90 young people in 2021/22.
- The proportion of Initial Health Assessment (IHAs) being carried out within statutory timelines has declined during 2019/2020, achieving about 92% in quarter three of 2019/20. Progress made to address this has been presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board previously with an action plan for achieving timeliness in the completion of IHAs in Thurrock. Yet, between 01 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 only 57% had been completed in time (Thurrock CCG Safeguarding Team, 2020).
 - In 2021, the uptake of childhood immunisations by CLA was **86%** which is below the 95% target but in line with national uptake. While uptake amongst the general population is also below target, actions are required to ensure that CLA are on track to increase uptake alongside non-looked-after peers (Department of Education, 2021).
 - The Social Survey Division of the Office for National Statistics estimated that 45% of CLA aged 5-17 years would normally have a diagnosable mental health disorder (Healthy London Partnership, 2020). This equates to approximately **134 (out of 298)** CLA aged 5-17 with a diagnosable mental health disorder in Thurrock in 2021. Although there is no estimated prevalence for Care Leavers, a similar prevalence rate would lead to a figure of **126 (out of 281)** Care Leavers who may have a diagnosable mental health disorder in Thurrock. Similarly, within the general child population, 16% (one in six) children and young people (aged 5-16 years) were identified as having a probable mental disorder increasing from one in nine (10.8%) in 2019 (NHS Digital, 2020). There is a need to ensure that mental health information is used for service and transition planning, in order to improve services offered by adjust them to children's mental health needs.
 - Children looked after accounted for 20% of statutory outcomes in 2020-21. This has slightly reduced to 18% for 2021-22. However, the cohort numbers fewer than 10 in the latest data and more than half of these children are looked after

because of Youth Detention Accommodation/remand. This means that CLA status became active as a direct result of their offending.

- Thurrock Youth Offending Team, Essex Police and Thurrock Social Care continue to work together to divert young people away from the criminal justice system via its Out of Court Disposal Panel. It is expected that this will reduce the number of CLA After receiving statutory outcomes as it provides voluntary interventions and support for children committing low level offences.

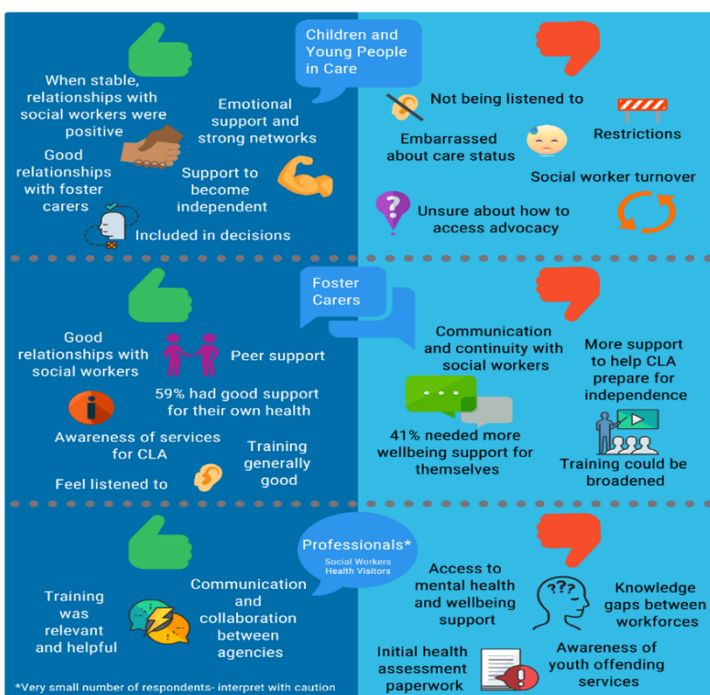
The needs of children looked after and Care Leavers are met through a multidisciplinary approach from health services, social care, and targeted provision and specialist services. At the heart of all of these services is the young person in care and the circumstances families find themselves in. The local service offer is based on the principle of 'team around the child' which is a multidisciplinary approach to addressing the inequalities and improving health and wellbeing needs of CLA. A detailed service mapping and description can be found in **section 8** of the extended health and wellbeing needs assessment.

CLA, Foster Carers and Professional Voice

We set out to understand and listen to the lived experiences of children and young people in care, foster carers and professionals in contact with CLA. The purpose was to give strength to the voice of the child in understanding CLA experiences of being in care, and to identify and understand where improvements can be made from their perspective. All CLA in Thurrock at the time were offered the opportunity to take part in this engagement exercise. This exercise resulted in a response rate of 22% (66 of the 2019 CLA cohort), and 19 foster carers and 15 professionals.

Summary of Consultation Responses by CLA, Forster Carers and Professionals

The infographic below provides a summary of the responses received.



CLA in Thurrock responded that they feel safe and secure within their placements with the majority suggesting no change needed in aspects of their placement. Most prominently, CLA valued the connection they have with their foster carer which gave them a feeling of being part of a family. CLA also highlighted some of the advantages and opportunities of being in care such as having access to activities, food and clothes and the feeling of safety. The majority of CLA have good relationships with their social worker when this is stable and felt included in decision making about their care or issues surrounding them.

Foster carers generally reported good to excellent relationships with their Supervising Social Workers and also appreciated the monthly peer groups and clinical support on offer. They highlighted some areas where improvements were required; more communication with the children’s social workers and improvement with the continuity of social workers and support in helping CLA prepare for independence after leaving care.

Professionals reported that communication and collaboration between agencies was good and the training they receive relevant to their practice. Areas highlighted as requiring improvement include the time it takes to get initial health assessment paperwork completed, more support for mental health issues and awareness of youth offending services.

There is a gap in our knowledge of the experiences of parents who have had their children taken into care, including those who have voluntarily required the local authority’s help in caring for their children. There is also a gap in the voices of care leavers in relation to their experience of transition; although national evidence suggests that Care Leavers find the transitioning period challenging.

Way forward, governance arrangements and recommended actions needed to bridge the gaps identified by the HNA

To reduce the gap between outcomes for looked after children and the rest of the child population in the borough it is crucial that entry into care be planned (although in some instances we know that this is not always possible) and that the care experience from the outset be a positive experience for all CLA and Care Leavers.

The CLA Steering group should act as the strategic group responsible for driving these recommendations ensuring there is good ongoing partnership working with the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (MSE ICB), Public Health and NELFT. The Thurrock CLA Steering group should act as the accountable operational group responsible for driving these recommendations, with overarching strategic responsibility resting with the Brighter Futures Partnership Board.

As part of this needs assessment, we have also identified that there is an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of reunification for children with their families.

The following are proposed actions, informed by this needs assessment, aimed to develop and enhance services for Thurrock’s CLA and Care Leavers building on the ongoing CLA support programme

Proposed actions for the development and improvement of CLA services in Thurrock

Key Finding	Recommendation
<u>A.- Risks associated with CLA</u>	
Positive association between deprivation and the chances of going into care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LA should evaluate the Signs of Safety and research in practice approaches in achieving secure attachment, in line with NICE Guidance in order to ensure exposure to risk is adequately identified

<p>Risk of placement under household with exposure to, or experiences of ACEs and/or Toxic Trio*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy to apply evidence-based interventions which reduce ACEs (see further recommendation below) • Interventions should be offered at universal, selected, and targeted levels as a way to address personal, familial, and environmental risk factors and the wider determinants of health.
Key Finding	Recommendation
<p>To improve the understanding and identification of vulnerability risk factors experienced by parents and households</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s and adult mental health services should foster more collaboration between teams • Refining and strengthening the pathway for identification of ACEs and/or Toxic Trio* through the Multiagency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Adult Mental Health pathways.
<u>B.- Engagement with CLA, Foster Carers and Professionals</u>	
<p>CLA reported experiencing three or more social worker changes in a year, contributing to the negative experiences they had whilst in care and reflected within the stability index estimates of social worker changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social care turnover in Thurrock should be reviewed to identify opportunities to reduce turnover and improve care experiences and stability. Children’s Social care should continue to initiate steps towards achieving this outcome by conducting benchmarking and a deep dive to understand reasons/local picture and to identify mitigation options. • A system-wide deep dive could take into consideration examples of good practice from other Local Authorities . Responsibility for this could reside with the CLA Steering Group.
<p>CLA are entitled to an advocate who will assist in conveying their wishes to professionals. Thurrock CLA who participated in the engagement process lacked awareness of advocacy services available to them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan to increase understanding, access to and use of advocacy services in order to shape and align the advocacy service into an offer that serves CLA needs
<p>Majority of Foster Carers reported needing help with their health and wellbeing (especially MH) and support in preparing CLA for adulthood or leaving care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with foster carers on their health and wellbeing through their supervisory social worker – targeted awareness on available wellbeing offer as well as during induction activities. • Engage both in-house and private foster carers in the planning transition to adulthood – a quick win will be to incorporate this within foster carers training/induction
<p>Professionals reported that access to mental health services is an area that needs more focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the support from clinical supervisor to the foster care community and ensure there is provision through Southend, Essex and Thurrock CAMHS to support care of CLA. This may require further exploration of need and how this can be met. • Engage CLA and care leavers in participation programmes to improve their emotional and mental wellbeing - For example, the survey conducted by the

	Healthy London Partnership of mental health services for CLA and Care Leavers .
Key Finding	Recommendation
<u>C.- Health and Wellbeing</u>	
<p>The Initial Health Assessment (IHA) is a key opportunity to identify the health needs of any child or young person in care, in order to achieve and protect their wellbeing. IHAs have a statutory timeframe of 20 working days. However, in Thurrock and between 01 April 2020 and 31 March 2021 just 57% IHAs had been performed in time.</p>	
<p>Access to the EWMHS service is prioritised for CLA through a triage process however, there is insufficient data on categories of concerns recorded for CLA</p>	<p>Engage CLA and care leavers in participation programmes to improve their emotional and mental wellbeing. <i>An option for consideration could potentially be the survey conducted by the Healthy London Partnership of mental health services for CLA and Care leavers.</i></p>
<p>There is a gap in our knowledge of the extent of sexual health need in CLA and Care leavers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sexual Health Service - commissioners and provider should work to enhance local data recording & collecting procedures to inform understanding regarding the uptake and usage of the Sexual Health service by CLA and Care Leavers. This should highlight gaps in provision and relevant adaptations. • The sexual health service should work in a way that ensures age-appropriate information is available to young people in care either through the local offer website or the NHS App. • This should be considered within the next re-procurement of the Sexual Health Service.
<p>Further improvements are needed to increase the proportion of CLA having dental checks each year to 90% (from 82% in 2020) and their outcomes. (Department of Education, 2021)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devise a training package of early intervention in collaboration with OHID for foster carers and other main caregivers of CLA to promote good oral health based on consistent evidence. • There is also an opportunity to co-produce questions for assessing effective ways to support CLA, foster carers to better access dental health checks during the proposed annual or bi-annual CLA engagement activity
<p>CLA uptake of childhood immunisations does not meet the recommended national immunisation coverage. Although data on up-to-date immunisation status for CLA are now in line with England average this is still not comparable with the general population.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and regional strategic plans for increasing immunisation uptake should include CLA as a vulnerable group of interest. An audit of the immunisation status of all CLA and care leavers in Thurrock should be conducted to confirm uptake is up-to-date. Capture data collected through the Healthy Families commissioned services on immunisation uptake for CLA
<p>Exploring categories of offences CLA groups engage in, collating appropriate information enable tailored interventions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Services should continue to review and undertake benchmarking analysis of this data to further understand the type of criminal offences young people in care have been involved in, and with partners identify opportunities for preventative action in line with the Annual Public Health Report 2019.

<p>The Virtual School provides support to CLA to ensure there is a focus on closing the gap between the percentage of general pupils and CLA achieving a 9-4 pass in Maths and English at KS4. However, performance against national CLA cohorts is positive for Thurrock</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key professionals, including the virtual school service, should continue to conduct a detailed analysis of CLA's educational experiences and form an action plan to close the gap in educational outcomes between CLA and the general school pupil population in Thurrock. • This analysis could be achieved through the proposed annual engagement programme with Children Looked After in conjunction with the Corporate Parenting Committee.

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05 August 2022		ITEM: 7
Health and Wellbeing Board		
Essex, Southend and Thurrock Dementia Strategy Refresh		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Allison Hall (Service Manager – Commissioning, Adult Social Care) and Catherine Wilson (Strategic Lead – Commissioning and Procurement, Adult Social Care)		
Accountable Assistant Director: Les Billingham – Assistant Director, Adult Social Care and Community Development		
Accountable Director: Ian Wake – Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek agreement to the priorities and commitments contained within the Draft Southend, Essex and Thurrock Dementia Strategy – 2022 to 2026.

This is a refreshed strategy building on the previous Essex wide strategy that came to an end in 2021. The 2017-2021 strategy was developed in response to people with dementia and their carers wanting more joined-up working across organisations and localities.

The priorities and commitments have been developed with people across the wider Essex area.

Although, this wider partnership approach is valued by Thurrock – this report also details the plan to develop a separate Thurrock Implementation Plan (health and social care) to reflect the strengths and experiences of the communities we serve.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **That the Health and Wellbeing Board agree the draft priorities and commitments contained in the refreshed Essex, Southend and Thurrock Dementia Strategy.**

1.2 That the Health and Wellbeing Board agree the next steps in the development of a Thurrock Implementation/Action Plan.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 In 2017, as a response to feedback about needing better joined up services for people with dementia and their carers, an overarching joint health and social care Southend, Essex and Thurrock Dementia strategy was agreed by all partners. A Thurrock (health and social care) specific implementation plan was also developed at this time which translated those high-level priorities/commitments into more meaningful localised/actions for people with dementia and their carers who live in Thurrock.
- 2.2 This strategy came to an end during the pandemic. Due to the constraints of the pandemic and the availability of staff who were undertaking other activities, there was a delay in refreshing this document.
- 2.3 In 2021, we started the consultation process across the wider Essex area, but due to the restrictions in place at the time and the variable nature of the pandemic, the engagement was limited to on-line. The consultation responses were collated by Essex Council on behalf of all partners.
- 2.4 The first consultation sought the views of people with dementia, their carers, professionals and partners about the existing priorities and whether they were still the right ones to enable people to live well with dementia. Because so much had changed during the pandemic, we also took the opportunity to try and understand the current situation for people with dementia and their carers and what the future might look like.
- 2.5 There was a large consensus on nine priorities at the end of this consultation. The second part of the consultation was launched to ascertain if the public agreed with the commitments from all organisations to deliver on those priorities. Again, there was a large consensus and this formed the basis of the draft refreshed Dementia Strategy.
- 2.6 Although we are committed to working with all partners across Essex to improve the lives of people with dementia and their carers, we have from the outset stated that Thurrock will again develop its own specific implementation/action plan.
- 2.7 As stated, due to the restrictions in place at the time, the Essex wide priorities and commitments were developed utilising on-line consultation methods. As many restrictions have now been lifted, we will carry out a more in-depth engagement process (Healthwatch will lead on our behalf) to turn those priorities and commitments into defined actions informed by people with dementia and their cares.
- 2.8 As in 2017, Thurrock's 'actions' will sit in a separate document that will be submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board for approval and are not part of

the current document. We want to ensure that the implementation plan reflects the experiences of people living in Thurrock and the strengths and assets we have that are unique to our communities. As before, the implementation plan will be a joint health and social care document.

- 2.9 The government has recently announced its intention to publish a 10-year plan for Dementia that focusses on timely diagnosis (dealing with the backlog caused by the pandemic), explores how technology, medicine and science can reduce the numbers and severity of dementia and commits to boosting research.
- 2.10 It is expected that the 10-year plan will be published in time to include any new or additional priorities for the health and social care system within the Local Implementation Plan.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 People with dementia and their carers identified the need for a joined-up approach across health and social care in the wider Essex area. To provide context, the importance of this approach is evident in the recent launch of the Dementia Buddy scheme. As the board is aware, all 3 local authorities, health partners, Alzheimer's Society, police and fire service worked together to enable this initiative to be launched across organisational and geographical boundaries. This scheme could not support people with dementia if restricted to one locality.
- 3.2 As such, we recognised the importance of refreshing this partnership document.
- 3.3 Consideration was initially given to the inclusion of Thurrock's actions within the main document. However, we felt that it was important to keep that focus on the local area and to ensure that a more in-depth engagement was carried out with local people (as it became clearer that restrictions were being lifted and were likely to continue. It will also allow us to capture any additional priorities for the Governments 10 year plan for Dementia).

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The priorities and commitments contained in the refreshed strategy were informed by people with dementia and their carers. This strategy shows a commitment by all partners to work together to enable people to live well with dementia.
- 4.2 However, it is important that the people of Thurrock shape how those priorities will be delivered in their own communities. As such, a separate Thurrock (health and social care) Implementation Plan will be developed in partnership with people with dementia and their carers.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 As stated in section 2, an on-line consultation was carried out in two stages. The first consultation ran from 15 February 2021 to 05 April 2021. The second part of the consultation ran between 13 May 2022 to 17 June 2022. Although Essex County Council collated the responses, this was advertised on Thurrock's Consultation Portal and we used local specialist services and networks to promote the opportunity.
- 5.2 If the Board agrees the draft strategy we will then commence (post summer holidays) with a meaningful engagement exercise to shape the Local Implementation plan. Thurrock Healthwatch will be undertaking this engagement on behalf of the Council to ensure impartiality if improvements are identified to either Council or Health funded/provided services.
- 5.3 This Local Implementation Plan will be shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board and Overview and Scrutiny for agreement.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The draft strategy and proposed implementation plan will particularly contribute to meeting the strategic priority; People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.
- 6.2 The aim of the strategy is to enable people to live well with Dementia and provide high quality services to both people with dementia and their carers in a community where they feel valued.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Strategic Lead – Corporate Finance

There are no significant financial implications contained within this document. The Thurrock Implementation Plan will have specific actions and will identify the funding required in order to implement the development.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **click this box once and type name of the officer who has verified the implications**
click this box once and type the job title of the officer who has verified the implications

There are currently no legal or procurement implications. This may change when the implementation plan has been developed.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

The purpose of this refresh is to ensure we are meeting the needs of people with dementia and their carers post pandemic. Although the pandemic limited our forms of consultation, we are trying to counter this with an in-depth engagement exercise for the Thurrock specific Implementation Plan underpinned by the principles of the Collaborative Communities Framework (engagement; empowerment; equality). As such, this should result in improved outcomes for this vulnerable group of people.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, and Impact on Looked After Children

N/A

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Southend, Essex and Thurrock Dementia Strategy 2017-2021
- Southend, Essex and Thurrock Dementia Strategy – Thurrock Implementation Plan (June 2018)



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9. Appendices to the report

- N/A

Report Author:

Sarah Turner

Commissioning Manager

Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET)

Dementia Strategy 2022–2026

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Foreword

This strategy brings together organisations from across Health and Social Care and the Voluntary Sector to speak with one voice on our aspirations for making Southend, Essex and Thurrock places where people can live well with dementia.

The impact on all those who live with dementia, including friends, family and carers, is clear to all. It is critical that we have a strategy that looks at every element, from the very tough nettle of prevention, through early diagnosis into care, support for carers and provision of accommodation.

This updated strategy for Southend, Essex and Thurrock builds on successes and lessons of the past and will be invaluable as we work together in collaboration.

Cllr John Spence, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health, Essex County Council

After a number of setbacks from the pandemic, it's fantastic to see that the Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Dementia Strategy has been finalised and is ready to share with our residents.

This is a big step for our collective services across Essex as we commit to a joint strategic plan to not only gain a greater understanding of dementia, its causes and development, but also help to adopt a preventative approach that impacts those with the disease and their wider spheres of friends, family and those who care for them.

Following consultation with our residents in Thurrock and across Essex, we have been able to ensure our approach considers not only the provision of services, but the concerns of those in our communities who are currently facing or aware of the challenges of living with dementia. This is a crucial step to understanding all levels of the disease in our communities and ensuring this direct feedback remains at the heart of our forward-thinking approach for support in the future.

Thank you to everyone whose opinions and expertise fed into the creation of this dementia strategy. Rest assured your views, and the impact of this strategy, will lay the foundations for the best healthcare and support possible for generations to come.

Cllr Deborah Huelin, Thurrock Council Cabinet Member for Adults & Health

The number of people affected by dementia is rising and the government announced a 10-year plan in May 2022 that aims to reduce Dementia by 40%.

The development of this strategy has been delayed through COVID 19 but Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) have taken learning from our existing Dementia strategy and developed the new strategy drawing on best practice and consultation.

Current figures using the health census from 2019 show that Essex likely has 21,972 over 65's with dementia and this is set to increase 33% by 2030. The government is projecting that over one million people in the UK could be living with dementia by 2025.

In 2020 Southend G.P. data showed that Southend had a higher prevalence of dementia than the average in England. This strategy has a commitment to research, training, local place-based action, and prevention. It supports our living well priority with 'living well longer' through early diagnosis, support, self-help, the nine priorities identified with stakeholders, and 10 strong commitments by SET. Together these underpin the dementia strategy implementation plan that supports the government's aim of a 40% reduction in dementia and improves quality of life for our residents who have dementia, their families, and carers.

Cllr Kay Mitchell, Southend-on-Sea City Council Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration

Introduction

About dementia

Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe a collection of symptoms that affect the brain including memory loss, perception, problems with reasoning and communication skills. Dementia is defined as a progressive disease that affects more than one aspect of daily life and can lead to a reduction in a person's ability to conduct routine tasks such as washing, dressing and cooking.

There are over 200 types of dementia including Alzheimer's, Vascular and dementia with Lewy bodies. Dementia is not a natural part of ageing and does not just affect older people. It has a physical, psychological, social, and economic impact, not only on people with dementia, but also on their carers¹ (particularly unpaid carers), families and communities.

Government guidance² estimates the number of people living with dementia globally to be 50 million, with this number expected to more than treble by 2050 to 152 million. The guidance highlights that around 850,000 people in the UK are living with dementia, 120,000 of which live alone. By 2025, over one million people could have dementia in the UK and by 2040, this figure will exceed 1.6 million.

Dementia is one of the major causes of disability and dependency among older people with no known cure. It is estimated that a person is formally diagnosed with dementia every three minutes in the UK, that one in three people born this year will develop dementia in their life, that dementia caused more deaths in England in year end March 2021 than Covid-19 and a quarter of all those who died of Covid-19 had dementia.



Image 1, Source – Public Health England³

Annex C: The Impact of Dementia; Data and Insights also offers comprehensive information on the impact of dementia on individuals, families, communities, care and support services.

¹ A 'carer' is someone who - without being paid - regularly looks after, helps or supports someone over the age of 18 who wouldn't be able to manage everyday life without their help.

² Government guidance, *Dementia: applying All Our Health* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dementia-applying-all-our-health/dementia-applying-all-our-health>

³ Public Health England: *health matters: midlife approaches to reduce dementia risk* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-midlife-approaches-to-reduce-dementia-risk/health-matters-midlife-approaches-to-reduce-dementia-risk>

Strategic Context

The national approach

In May 2022, Government announced a new 10-year plan⁴ to tackle dementia and boost the £375m funding already committed for research to better understand neurodegenerative diseases. The plan aims to reduce the 40% of dementia considered to be potentially preventable, including exploration of new technology, science and medicine to help reduce the numbers and severity of dementia.

It also aims to help reduce the NHS backlog as a result of Covid-19 to ensure more timely dementia diagnosis. This strategy will take note and incorporate key initiatives of the Government's dementia plan when published later in 2022.

The strategy takes account of the Public Health England Health matters: public health issues⁵ collection, with particular reference to the dementia section and Health matters: midlife approaches to reduce dementia risk⁶.

Government guidance Dementia: applying All Our Health⁷ encourages frontline health and care professionals to provide advice and support on dementia risk reduction as part of their daily practice and contact with individuals, framing this around NHS England's Well Pathway for Dementia⁸:






NHS ENGLAND TRANSFORMATION FRAMEWORK – THE WELL PATHWAY FOR DEMENTIA				
PREVENTING WELL  Risk of people developing dementia is minimised "I was given information about reducing my personal risk of getting dementia" STANDARDS: Prevention ⁽¹⁾ Risk Reduction ⁽⁵⁾ Health Information ⁽⁴⁾ Supporting research ⁽⁶⁾	DIAGNOSING WELL  Timely accurate diagnosis, care plan, and review within first year "I was diagnosed in a timely way" "I am able to make decisions and know what to do to help myself and who else can help" STANDARDS: Diagnosis ⁽¹⁾⁽⁵⁾ Memory Assessment ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾ Concerns Discussed ⁽³⁾ Investigation ⁽⁴⁾ Provide Information ⁽⁴⁾ Integrated & Advanced Care Planning ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾⁽³⁾⁽⁵⁾	SUPPORTING WELL  Access to safe high quality health & social care for people with dementia and carers "I am treated with dignity & respect" "I get treatment and support, which are best for my dementia and my life" STANDARDS: Choice ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾ , BPSD ⁽⁶⁾⁽²⁾ Liaison ⁽²⁾ Advocates ⁽³⁾ Housing ⁽³⁾ Hospital Treatments ⁽⁴⁾ Technology ⁽⁵⁾ Health & Social Services ⁽⁵⁾ Hard to Reach Groups ⁽³⁾⁽⁵⁾	LIVING WELL  People with dementia can live normally in safe and accepting communities "I know that those around me and looking after me are supported" "I feel included as part of society" STANDARDS: Integrated Services ⁽¹⁾⁽³⁾⁽⁵⁾ Supporting Carers ⁽²⁾⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾ Carers Respite ⁽²⁾ Co-ordinated Care ⁽¹⁾⁽⁵⁾ Promote independence ⁽¹⁾⁽⁴⁾ Relationships ⁽³⁾ Leisure ⁽³⁾ Safe Communities ⁽³⁾⁽⁵⁾	DYING WELL  People living with dementia die with dignity in the place of their choosing "I am confident my end of life wishes will be respected" "I can expect a good death" STANDARDS: Palliative care and pain ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾ End of Life ⁽⁴⁾ Preferred Place of Death ⁽⁵⁾
References: (1) NICE Guideline. (2) NICE Quality Standard 2010. (3) NICE Quality Standard 2013. (4) NICE Pathway. (5) Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Dementia Pathway. (6) BPSD – Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of dementia				
RESEARCHING WELL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and innovation through patient and carer involvement, monitoring best-practice and using new technologies to influence change. Building a co-ordinated research strategy, utilising Academic & Health Science Networks, the research and pharmaceutical industries. 				
INTEGRATING WELL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, Local Government Association, Alzheimer's Society, Department of Health and Public Health England on co-commissioning strategies to provide an integrated service ensuring a seamless and integrated approach to the provision of care. 				
COMMISSIONING WELL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop person-centred commissioning guidance based on NICE guidelines, standards, and outcomes based evidence and best-practice. Agree minimum standard service specifications for agreed interventions, set business plans, mandate and map and allocate resources. 				
TRAINING WELL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a training programme for all staff that work with people with dementia, whether in hospital, General Practice, care home or in the community. Develop training and awareness across communities and the wider public using Dementia Friends, Dementia Friendly Hospitals/Communities/Homes. 				
MONITORING WELL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop metrics to set & achieve a national standard for Dementia services, identifying data sources and set 'profiled' ambitions for each. Use the Intensive Support Team to provide 'deep-dive' support and assistance for Commissioners to reduce variance and improve transformation. 				

Image 2 – NHS England's Well Pathway for Dementia

⁴ Gov press release, *Health secretary announces 10-year plan for dementia* [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/health-secretary-announces-10-year-plan-for-dementia#:~:text=Health%20and%20Social%20Care%20Secretary,to%20better%20understand%20neurodegenerative%20diseases.&text=A%20new%2010%2Dyear%20plan%20to%20tackle%20dementia%20will%20be,\(Tuesday%2017%20May%202022\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/health-secretary-announces-10-year-plan-for-dementia#:~:text=Health%20and%20Social%20Care%20Secretary,to%20better%20understand%20neurodegenerative%20diseases.&text=A%20new%2010%2Dyear%20plan%20to%20tackle%20dementia%20will%20be,(Tuesday%2017%20May%202022))

⁵ Gov collection, *Health matters: public health issues* <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/health-matters-public-health-issues#dementia>

⁶ Gov collection, *Health matters: midlife approaches to reduce dementia risk* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-midlife-approaches-to-reduce-dementia-risk>

⁷ Gov guidance, *Dementia: applying All Our Health* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dementia-applying-all-our-health/dementia-applying-all-our-health>

⁸ NHS England, *the Well Pathway for Dementia* <https://www.england.nhs.uk/mentalhealth/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2016/03/dementia-well-pathway.pdf>

The Dementia Strategy will align with national approaches as highlighted above, including any forthcoming activities related to the [adult social care reform white paper](#)⁹, [Health and Care Act 2022](#)¹⁰ and the [integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all white paper](#)¹¹.

All of which will enable better links between health and social care systems ensuring that the person is at the centre with local systems designed to deliver seamless care and support, enabling people to retain their independence, health and wellbeing. This includes utilising community assets, building on local delivery plans and placed-based action to ensure a person-centred approach.

Essex County Council strategic approach

The Dementia Strategy will take account of and incorporate [Everyone's Essex](#)¹² four areas of focus, with emphasis on promoting the health, care and wellbeing of all Essex residents. The four areas of focus are:

1. The economy
2. The environment
3. Children and families
4. Promoting health, care and wellbeing for all parts of our population who need support

The Dementia Strategy will build on the [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)¹³ 2018–2022 (JHWS) areas of focus (including any subsequent updates), which are:

1. Improving mental health and wellbeing
2. Addressing obesity, improving diet and increasing physical activity
3. Influencing conditions and behaviours linked to health inequalities
4. Enabling and supporting people with long-term conditions and disabilities

The JHWS references the 2019 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment¹⁴ (JSNA) where it was identified that dementia diagnosis is not as good as it could be and that there is an ageing population with more people with long-term conditions.

The JSNA notes that over the last three years the estimated dementia diagnosis rate in people aged 65 and over in Essex is estimated to have risen from 60.5% in 2017 to 64.5% in 2019. Despite this increase, diagnosis rates remain lower than the England average of 68.7% with only 2 districts (Epping Forest 81.7% and Rochford 81.7%), having diagnosis rates over the England level (Maldon is the lowest at 57.6%).

POPPI (Projecting Older People's Population Information) projections using health and census data estimate that in 2019 there are likely to be 21,972 people across Essex over the age of 65

⁹ Gov policy paper: *adult social care charging reform: further details*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-health-and-social-care/adult-social-care-charging-reform-further-details>

¹⁰ Parliamentary bills: Health and Care Act 2022 <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3022>

¹¹ Gov policy paper: *integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-health-and-social-care-for-all/integration-and-innovation-working-together-to-improve-health-and-social-care-for-all-html-version>

¹² Essex County Council: *Everyone's Essex: our plan for levelling up the county 2021-2025* <https://www.essex.gov.uk/everyones-essex-our-plan-for-essex-2021-2025>

¹³ Essex County Council: *Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2022* <https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/e6k09/essex-joint-health-and-wellbeing-strategy-2018-2022>

¹⁴ Essex County Council, *Essex JSNA and district profile reports 2019* <https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/exwyd/essex-jsna-and-district-profile-reports-2019>

with dementia and that this figure could increase by 33% by 2030 to 29,437 people. Tendring currently has the highest number of estimated people with dementia (3,104) whilst Harlow has the lowest (1,018).

In addition to the above, the refreshed Dementia Strategy will work alongside other key strategies to include (but not limited to):

- The Adult Social Care Business Plan
- Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Essex All Age Carers Strategy 2022–2026
- Meaningful Lives Matter, including the Essex Learning Disabilities and Autism Transformation programme and Supported Living Provider Forum
- Essex JSNA and district profiles
- District/borough/city Local Plans

A Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) approach

The previous SET Dementia Strategy lifecycle ended in 2021 and due to Covid-19 an update was delayed, although partnership activities continued during this period as did evidence gathering to understand the impact and outcomes of the strategy.

Review of the previous strategy highlighted challenges which include:

- The impact of an ageing SET population, with an increase in long-term conditions
- The need to improve timelier dementia diagnosis – through access to diagnostic/memory assessment services and encouraging people to pursue diagnosis, for example where delays or stigma may be present
- The complexities of system change i.e., when new operating models are introduced, or system goals change to address causes rather than symptoms
- The need to enhance alignment of priorities amongst multiple stakeholders
- The need for greater understanding and fulfilment of expectations across the system
- Tackling the stigma associated with dementia
- Cost implications for the wider economy
- Greater understanding of the cost of health and social care to support those living with dementia
- A population needs analysis based upon current and projected dementia diagnosis
- Increased need to share data and insights among multiple stakeholders to enhance diagnosis, support and understand the impact of dementia for organisations and partners
- The impact of Covid-19 such as a lack of face-to-face services, social isolation, loneliness, and increase in digitilisation of services

By adopting a SET approach that builds on learning and best practice from the previous strategy and takes account of other key SET strategies, this will build on community assets and drive development of a high-quality dementia support offer for the residents of SET. In doing so, the Dementia Strategy will provide an overarching ambition and nine priority areas for delivery through local partnerships and place-based plans focusing on local delivery and place-based action.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stage One

Essex County Council carried out a public consultation to inform a refresh of the SET Dementia Strategy. The consultation asked questions to establish if people agreed with the nine priorities and their reasons for this. The consultation ran during a period of lockdown, from 15 February 2021 to 5 April 2021.

A total of 164 online responses were received, including people living with dementia, their family and carers, partner organisations and health and social care professionals. These provided valuable insight into people's thoughts about our dementia priorities.

On average, 90% of respondents agreed that the nine proposed priorities were the right priorities, with further findings highlighted below.

1. **83% agreed that prevention is a priority to support citizens across SET who are living with or affected by dementia**
2. **94% of respondents agreed that diagnosis and support is a priority to support citizens across SET who are living with or affected by dementia**
3. **93% of respondents agreed that supporting carers is a priority to support citizens across SET who are living with or affected by dementia**
4. **93% of respondents agreed that finding information and advice is a priority to support citizens across SET who are living with or affected by dementia**
5. **92%** of respondents agree that **reducing the risk of crisis is a priority** to support citizens across SET who are living with or affected by dementia
6. **91%** of respondents agree that **living well in long-term care is a priority** to support citizens across SET who are living with or affected by dementia
7. **89%** of respondents agree that **end of life is a priority** to support citizens across SET who are living with or affected by dementia
8. **96%** of respondents agree that a **knowledgeable and skilled workforce is a priority** to support citizens across SET who are living with or affected by dementia
9. **91%** of respondents agree that **living well with dementia in the community is a priority** to support citizens across SET who are living with or affected by dementia
10. Free-text comments provided further detail which indicated:
 - A need for earlier help in the context of prevention, a need for ways to increase knowledge, information, and support for a people with dementia, their carers, and ongoing training for the workforce
 - ◀ ○ A need to ensure there is an increased focus on both those with younger onset of dementia, and older within a broadening range of support interventions, through a pathway of care that reflects all 'ages and stages' of dementia within a pathway that is focussed on prevention through the promotion of risk reduction and early help and support to enable a person to live well for longer
 - The need to be clearer in defining what we mean by the terms 'living-well' and 'prevention', due to a higher % of 'unsure' comments in the survey within these two priorities

Consultation findings enabled further insight of people's views and identify that the nine priorities remain the right priorities.

Stage Two

Essex County Council carried out a second stage of consultation on the strategy refresh, seeking further views on the proposed commitments to deliver against the agreed nine priorities. An online consultation ran from 13 May 2022 to 17 June 2022. A total of 78 online consultation responses

were received from people living with dementia, their family and carers, partner organisations and health and social care professionals.

Workshops and focus groups were held alongside this during the same period to gather further insight across a range of partners and stakeholders with an approximate total of 160 participants.

Groups engaged include but are not limited to ECC Carers focus group, ECC Adult Social Care focus group, South Essex Housing Group, One Colchester Delivery Board, Adult Social Care Braintree Neighbourhood Team, Essex Health and Wellbeing Board, North East Essex CCG Dementia Steering Group, North Essex Provider Forum, Pan Essex Dementia Action Alliance and SET District Dementia Action Alliances, East of England Older Peoples Mental Health & Dementia Network, Essex Local Councils, South East Essex Alliance Members and via a range of social media channels.

Stage two consultation findings are summarised below.

Online:

1. **88% agreed that across SET our commitment to work collaboratively across voluntary, health and statutory services to develop and deliver information to improve awareness of dementia and the support available is right.**
2. **88% agreed that across SET our commitment to involve and seek the views of people living with dementia and their carers, recognising their role as valued experts and equal partners is right.**
3. **89% agreed that across SET our commitment to work across our systems to improve support following diagnosis to promote independence, optimise strength, build resilience and prevent unnecessary crises is right.**
4. **93% agreed that across SET our commitment to develop and build on activities and training that improve professional practice and process is right.**
5. **87% agreed that across SET our commitment to work collaboratively with system partners to engage people living with dementia, their families and unpaid carers to better understand how we can improve access to the right information, advice and guidance at the right time to ensure they are fully supported is right.**
6. **86% agreed that across SET our commitment to improve access to dementia diagnosis at the earliest possible stage for the people of Essex, Southend and Thurrock is right.**
7. **87% agreed that across SET our commitment to work with people living with dementia, their families and carers to build more dementia-friendly and dementia-enabled communities and work to understand what support they need in relation to access to housing, transport, employment and technology is right.**
8. **81% agreed that across SET our commitment to continue to promote access to care technology to promote health, prevent deterioration and promote independence is right.**
9. **87% agreed that across SET our commitment to work with the care markets to encourage long term care settings to promote activities and solutions that increase community connections for people living with dementia is right.**
10. **86% agreed that across SET our commitment to improve information that enables families to plan ahead to make informed decisions that support individuals to remain cared for in their preferred care setting is right.**
11. Free-text comments provided further detail which indicated:
 - XXX
 - XXX

12. Workshops/focus groups key findings:

- The need to coordinate timelier diagnosis and support in the key weeks after diagnosis, recognised as a critical window for early support and intervention that promotes a positive view of diagnosis, facilitating access to timely care and support thus enabling people to live well with dementia in their preferred place of residence
- The role of communities and groups is seen as crucial to the wrap-around offer of support for families and carers.
- The need to promote opportunities to share lived experience such as through peer networks is seen as a key aspect of feeling empowered and enabled following diagnosis to ensure access to appropriate and timely support, although caution was advised against information overload, so a balance is needed.
- To ensure learning from other care pathways and models (for example Cancer & Admiral Nurses) to gather insight on best practice and areas for improvement in care and support for individuals and carers.
- To improve and enable access to training and support for families and carers, alongside training opportunities for health and social care professionals and community organisations
- To develop closer working with the care providers incl. reablement and care home providers to improve experiences of discharge from hospital and to promote opportunities for access to appropriate training to understand distressed behaviours and the cause of perceived complexity relating to dementia
- To promote increased choice and control for those with dementia, their carers and family to enable people to live well with dementia.



Best practice exemplar – case study

In May 2022 as part of the Essex Year of Reading campaign, Essex Education Taskforce at Essex County Council partnered with Wayback, virtual reality technology specialists. The partnership worked with the James Hornby School and residents at Woodbury Court Dementia Care Home to deliver a intergenerational reminiscence project to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The project went Wayback to the Queen's Coronation using memory films and books to trigger memories, connection and conversation across young and older generational groups including people living with dementia.

This project sought to inspire a love of books and conversational storytelling to help people share first-hand accounts of events whilst bringing different generations together. The day was a huge success and built upon Everyone's Essex initiatives to help citizens to better understand and have compassion for others, as well as reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation across all ages.



Image 7 – selection of photographs from the intergenerational reminiscence project

Benefits of the project for children and young people included increased self-confidence, self-efficacy and wellbeing, promoting of positive relationships and positive changes in perceptions and attitudes about older people. For older people, benefits included enhancement of emotional wellbeing, reading to reignite memories, wider cognitive stimulation and mitigating the impact of social isolation and loneliness to aid recovery.

As part of the ongoing commitment to supporting innovative approaches, we will continue to promote opportunities for knowledge exchange in pilot activity and research projects. In particular, activities that support collaboration through research with a focus on dementia and ageing well initiatives with aims that seek to share knowledge and promote evidence-led approaches within place-based activities.

Annex B: Wider Initiatives Linked to Dementia Strategy Priorities also offers comprehensive information on a range of advice, guidance and initiatives focused on overall health and wellbeing or support for those with dementia, their carers, and families.

Strategy Mission, Priorities and Commitments

Our mission

Building on the previous strategy, consultation and engagement activity and national guidance and best practice, the refreshed Dementia Strategy sets out to make sure that:

- Those who experience dementia, and their families and carers feel they are understood and can access the support they need when they need it
- That communities and local organisations are aware of the impact dementia has on those who experience it and their families and carers
- That support for people with dementia and their families and carers is underpinned by levels of training and expertise among professionals and volunteers

And to further promote and enhance the conditions which will contribute to a reduction in prevalence and promoting health improvement in the long-term, recognising health inequalities and the wider determinants of health to promote better health outcomes for people across SET.

Our nine priorities

The mission will be achieved through delivery of our nine strategic priorities which, following stakeholder engagement, were agreed as:

1. **Prevention:** People in Southend, Essex and Thurrock will have good health and wellbeing, enabling them to live full and independent lives for longer
2. **Supporting unpaid carers:** Unpaid carers are supported to enable people with dementia to remain as independent as possible
3. **Reducing the risk of crisis:** All people with dementia receive support to reduce the risk and manage crisis
4. **A knowledgeable and skilled workforce:** All people with dementia receive support from knowledgeable and skilled professionals where needed
5. **Finding information and advice:** Everyone with dementia will have access to the right information at the right time
6. **Diagnosis and support:** All people with dementia will receive appropriate and timely diagnosis and integrated support
7. **Living well with dementia in the community:** All people with dementia are supported by their Southend, Essex and Thurrock communities to remain independent for as long as possible
8. **Living well in long-term care:** All people with dementia live well when in long-term care
9. **End of life:** People with dementia and their families plan ahead, receive good end of life care and are able to die in accordance with their wishes

Our commitments

Following stage two consultation activity and aligned to the nine priorities, the strategy sets out 10 commitments informed by the people of Southend, Essex and Thurrock:

1. We will work collaboratively within communities and across voluntary, health, care and statutory services to develop and deliver information to improve awareness of dementia, how to prevent dementia and the support available
2. We will involve and seek the views of people living with dementia and their unpaid carers, recognising their role as valued experts and equal partners to ensure carers have increased opportunity to access good quality support

3. We will work across our systems in to develop an integrated approach within communities to improve timely support following diagnosis to promote independence, optimise strength, build resilience, and prevent unnecessary crises
4. We will develop and build on activities and training that improve professional practice and process
5. We will work collaboratively with system partners to engage people living with dementia, their families, unpaid carers and wider support networks to better understand how we can improve access to the right information, advice and guidance at the right time to ensure they are fully supported
6. We will improve access to and opportunities for dementia diagnosis at the earliest possible stage for the people of Southend, Essex and Thurrock
7. We will work with people living with dementia, their families, unpaid carers and wider support networks to build more dementia-friendly and dementia-enabled communities and work to understand what timely support they need in relation to access to housing, transport, employment and technology
8. We will continue to promote access to care technology to promote health, prevent deterioration and promote independence
9. We will work with the care markets to encourage long-term care settings to promote the knowledge, understanding and skills actively empowering activities and solutions that increase and retain their connections within their communities'
10. We will work with families, communities and palliative specialists to improve information that enables families to plan ahead to make informed decisions that support individuals to remain cared for in their preferred care setting

Strategy Monitoring and Review

Review and monitoring of the strategy, unless otherwise stated, will take place annually across Southend, Essex and Thurrock. See **Annex A: Implementation Plan** The plan will sit as a separate document to be reviewed and refreshed throughout the life of the strategy enabling it to respond to changing needs and emerging issues in the future. For further details on delivery of actions and outcome measures against the agreed priorities and commitments.

However, it is recognised that local action plans to help deliver the Dementia Strategy will be developed by partners based on population need, local pathways and priorities, building on known community assets and initiatives identified at locality level. Monitoring and review of local action plans will also take place at local level, to be agreed at their discretion and underpinned by local processes and governance.

Governance and oversight

The Dementia Strategy will align to existing internal and external governance, oversight and partnership boards. It is acknowledged that Integrated Commissioning Boards (ICBs) will be implemented in July 2022. The introduction of ICBs, Local Alliances and subsequent governance structures may result in changes to existing governance, oversight and partnership arrangements.

Review of the previous strategy highlighted the need to further embed the strategic approach to dementia within existing plans. As a result, a framework (Image 8) has been developed based upon NHS England's Well Pathway for Dementia and Livewell themes to support health and wellbeing and outlines the building blocks for change which can be aligned to the emerging ICBs, Local Alliances and wider partnerships.

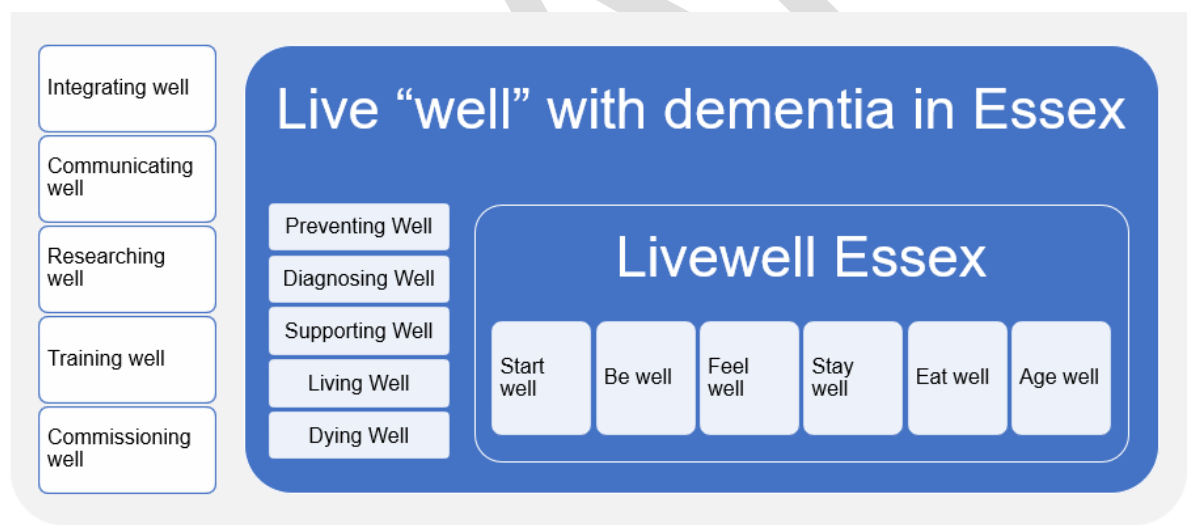


Image 8 – Living well with dementia in Essex framework

Wider initiatives

There is a range of important wider activity and initiatives being undertaken across public and private sector organisations with the aim to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for those living with dementia, their family and carers.

To share knowledge, best practice and monitor progress across a range of partners and key stakeholders, **Annex B: Wider Initiatives Linked to Dementia Strategy Priorities** offer further detail of the range of partner activities underway across SET. This will be reviewed and updated throughout the strategy lifecycle to complement activity undertaken alongside the Dementia Strategy.

Annex A: Dementia Strategy Implementation Plan

Whilst the implementation plan aligns to the lifecycle of the strategy, it is acknowledged that Integrated Commissioning Boards (ICBs) will be implemented from July 2022. As such, the introduction of ICBs, Local Delivery Plans and subsequent governance structures may result in amendments to the implementation plan.

Action/s	Outcome Measure	Owner/Contributor	Timescale
Priority 1 – Prevention: People in Southend, Essex and Thurrock will have good health and wellbeing, enabling them to live full and independent lives for longer			
Commitment 1 – We will work collaboratively within communities and across voluntary, health, care and statutory services to develop and deliver information to improve awareness of dementia, how to prevent dementia and the support available			
Development and delivery of a dementia awareness activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will have a greater understanding of the effectiveness and impact of healthy lifestyle on modifiable risk factors to reduce the risk of developing dementia, including stop smoking, be more active, reduce alcohol consumption, improved diet, lose weight if necessary and maintain a healthy weight • We will work with partners in Public Health to understand the effectiveness and impact of healthy lifestyle campaigns on raising awareness of modifiable risk factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Essex – Find Your Active Programme • Strengthening communities – Essex Wellbeing Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sep 2023 and annual reviews
Essex Dementia Intergenerational programme (EDIP) activities to increase children and young people's knowledge and understanding of dementia to support improved awareness of dementia in younger age-groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people will have an increased knowledge and understanding of actions they can undertake in support of healthy lifestyles • Children and young people will have an increased knowledge and understanding of dementia to support improved awareness • Children and young people will undertake action in support of a dementia friendly generation to actively promote and support dementia enabled communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECC key service areas – Adult Social Care, Public Health, education and CCG/ICS • Voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners • LA commissioned dementia support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing monitoring • Annual EDIP oversight report

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase the reach and volume of Essex schools engaged in dementia intergenerational activity from the 2021 baseline by a further 50% in 2022/23 Links to 'starting well' and 'risk reduction' 		
Develop and align to Healthy Living activities and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People living with dementia and their unpaid carers are able to access activities and maintain their independence, and physical, emotional and mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Find your active PEM and Essex Wellbeing Service Social Prescribing outcome/performance measures 	Timescales to be aligned to respective strategies action plans and service areas.
Priority 2 – Supporting unpaid carers: Carers are supported to enable people living with dementia to remain as independent as possible			
Commitment 2 – We will involve and seek the views of people living with dementia and their unpaid carers, recognising their role as valued experts and equal partners to ensure carers have increased opportunity to access good quality support			
Improve pathways to formal assessment where needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer a carer's assessment and contingency plan to every unpaid carer of someone with dementia to identify so that they get the benefit of the support they are entitled to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Age Carers Strategy Adult Social Care data Commissioned Carer and Dementia Support Services monitoring Unpaid carers voice and dementia voices Carers Survey 	Timescales to align with commissioned services reporting and other strategies action plans
Support and training for unpaid carers of people with dementia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unpaid carers are supported to be able to continue working and to access health and support services to maintain their own health and wellbeing Work with system partners including health, education, voluntary and community sector organisations to build on and develop support in local communities Number of unpaid carers supported to understand impact of dementia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA dementia programmes working with/across relevant LA and health partners and commissioned services including Primary Care Essex Wellbeing Service LA commissioned carer and dementia support services Health outcomes and service data 	Timescales to align with commissioned services reporting

<p>Priority 3 – Reducing the risk of crisis: All people with dementia receive support to reduce the risk and manage crisis</p>			
<p>Commitment 3 – We will work across our systems in to develop an integrated approach within communities to improve timely support following diagnosis to promote independence, optimise strength, build resilience and prevent unnecessary crises</p>			
<p>Develop health and care services that work for people living with dementia to reduce the risk of crisis, reduce avoidable admissions and delayed discharge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible alternatives to hospital admission and to support early discharge wherever possible, including access to urgent community response/virtual wards and intermediate care • Reduction in number of emergency admissions and delayed discharges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Alliances, ICB delivery of urgent care response teams and discharge to assess models • NHS England dementia diagnosis rates 	<p>Timescales align to local system surveillance and reporting arrangements</p>
<p>Build services, support and communities in Essex that will enable people living with dementia and their carers to have improved confidence in navigating the health and social care system to ensure their needs are met</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living with dementia and their carers are provided with good post diagnostic support and information about the options available to them as their dementia progresses • Increase number of primary care navigators that have achieved Dementia Friendly accreditation • Number of people supported to make contingency and advance care plans • Number of advance care plans completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS England dementia diagnosis rates • CCG, Alliance and ICB commissioned • NHS England dementia diagnosis rate • Primary care data 	<p>Timescales align to local system surveillance and reporting arrangements incl. NHS digital Dementia Diagnosis Rates</p>
<p>Priority 4 – A knowledgeable & skilled workforce: All people with dementia receive support from knowledgeable and skilled professionals where needed</p>			
<p>Commitment 4 – We will develop and build on activities and training that improve professional practice and process</p>			
<p>Map the current training and development offer for those working to provide advice and support to people living with dementia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and education activities are aligned to the HEE dementia training standards framework • People living with dementia can lead fulfilling lives and live independently for longer • People living with dementia are enabled, with their carers, to access assessments, care and support services that help maintain their physical and mental health and wellbeing • People living with dementia receive care and support from an appropriately trained workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers • Health and social care commissioners • Health Education England (HEE) 	<p>Review and refresh of mapping to commence Jan' 2023</p>

Develop and build on activities that improve professional practice and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers of care and support workforce who participate in standards of training and professional development as appropriate to the levels and requirements of their role Prosper programme measures Training and education programmes are aligned/accredited to HEE dementia training standards framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market shaping programme HEE/workforce development programmes ESCA programmes 	Review and refresh of mapping to commence Jan' 2023
Engagement work with workforce/care market to understand levels of confidence when working with people with dementia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The workforce feels confident and empowered in their competences Engagement and surveys Prosper programme measures Annual workforce and staff surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and social care employers 	Annual workforce & staff surveys. Prosper programme outcomes/data.
Priority 5 – Finding information and advice: Everyone with dementia will have access to the right information at the right time			
Commitment 5 – We will work collaboratively with system partners to engage people living with dementia, their families, unpaid carers and wider support networks to better			
Work with residents to understand what good quality information and advice, for both pre and post diagnosis of dementia is and how it is accessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People are able to say they can access appropriate information, advice and guidance in a timely fashion that supports them to achieve their desired outcomes Co-production work with people living with dementia to inform what 'good' information is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA dementia programmes working with/across relevant LA and health partners and commissioned services, including primary care 	NHS patient experience Surveys. Carer annual survey. Dementia strategy Annual and report. commissioned services reporting (quarterly)
Work to maximise access to information, advice and guidance so that people have clear access to the right support, at the right time in the right place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People are able to say they have confidence and feel empowered to access care and support through a variety of mechanisms, including but not limited to digital and technological interventions Engagement and surveys Virtual/social media engagement levels Numbers of people of accessing digital technologies through commissioned technology services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technologies programme and commissioned technology services 	NHS patient experience Surveys. Carer annual survey. Dementia strategy Annual and report. commissioned services reporting (quarterly)

Publicise information, advice and guidance in effective ways and in clear and accessible language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can access information, advice and guidance through a range of mediums including social media and in community spaces (i.e. libraries, GPs and local councils) • “making every contact count” survey • Virtual/social media engagement levels • Organisations/communities achieving Dementia Friendly Communities accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA dementia programmes working with/across relevant LA and health partners and commissioned services, including primary care 	NHS patient experience Surveys. Carer annual survey. Dementia strategy Annual and report. commissioned services reporting (quarterly)
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Priority 6 – **Diagnosis and support:** All people with dementia will receive appropriate and timely diagnosis and integrated support

Commitment 6 – We will improve access to and opportunities for dementia diagnosis at the earliest possible stage for the people of Southend, Essex and Thurrock

Design, promote and support activities that enable people to understand how to seek a diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people able to find the right information, at the right time to gain a timely diagnosis enabling them to plan to live well with dementia • Surveys and engagement • Community Dementia Support Service/primary care data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA dementia programmes working with/across relevant LA and health partners and commissioned services, including primary care 	NHS patient experience Surveys. Carer annual survey. Dementia strategy Annual and report. commissioned services reporting (quarterly)
Good quality support and information available from pre diagnosis and throughout the diagnosis journey and people know where to access this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of engagement programme/residents’ panel • Annual surveys and engagement • Community Dementia Support Service data • Primary care data • NHS England dementia diagnosis rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA dementia programmes working with/across relevant LA and health partners and commissioned services, including primary care 	Timescales to align with commissioned services reporting and other strategies action plans
Clear dementia diagnosis pathways to enable people to receive timely diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are supported to understand their conditions and plan accordingly • Improve dementia diagnosis rate to NHS national aspiration of 66.7% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS England recorded data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly NHS digital Surveillance and diagnosis data

Priority 7 – **Living well with dementia in the community:** All people with dementia are supported by their Southend, Essex and Thurrock communities to remain independent for as long as possible

Commitment 7 – We will work with people living with dementia, their families, unpaid carers and wider support networks to build more dementia-friendly and dementia-enabled communities and work to understand what timely support they need in relation to access to housing, transport, employment and technology			
<p>Development and delivery of a co-produced dementia awareness programme to improve awareness, challenge stigma, enable, inspire and facilitate dementia inclusive communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living with dementia and their carers are enabled to live independently, to take part in activities (including commissioned day opportunities and domiciliary care) based on individual interest and choice, feel valued and included, reducing loneliness and contributing to their community • People with young onset dementia, from ethnic minority and LGBTQ+ communities receive support appropriate to their specific needs • Increase in the number of Dementia Friendly and enabled community places and spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of organisations and communities achieving Dementia Friendly Communities accreditation ○ Number of Local, District & Borough Councils achieving Dementia Friendly Communities Accreditation • Number of District/Borough “Local Plans” adopting Dementia friendly principles and shared with District Dementia Action Alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA dementia programmes working with/across relevant LA and health partners and commissioned services, including primary care • Local district/borough/city councils 	<p>Developing programme of activity over the course of the strategy, progress to be measured annually incl.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly through commissioned services reporting/monitoring • Annual review • Action plan activities within other strategies - Timescales to align • NHS Patient Experience & Primary Care Surveys.
Commitment 8 – We will continue to promote access to care technology to promote health, prevent deterioration and promote independence			
<p>Ensure access to Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme and psychological interventions for people living with dementia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living with dementia, or a non-dementia diagnosis mild cognitive impairment (MCI), depression, anxiety) and their carers are aware of the possibility of psychological support from IAPT services, and are routinely considered for and offered support • Number of people living with dementia accessing IAPT and psychological support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and social care commissioners • IAPT and Essex Wellbeing Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency aligned to services monitoring/reporting

<p>Priority 8 – Living well in long-term care: all people with dementia live well when in long-term care</p>			
<p>Commitment 9 – We will work with the care markets to encourage long-term care settings to promote the knowledge, understanding and skills actively empowering activities and solutions that increase and retain their connections within their communities'</p>			
<p>Long-term care settings are Dementia Friendly, supporting residents with dementia to live well and being engaged with their local communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase social connectedness including enabling access to digital technology, links to local communities and the dementia intergenerational programme • The number of people in care homes with access to social contact through digital technology • Participation in the prosper and intergenerational programmes • Number of care home achieving Dementia Friendly Communities accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essex Dementia Intergenerational programme • Market shaping/procurement • LA commissioned Dementia Friendly Communities programmes 	<p>Timescales to align with commissioned services reporting and other strategies action plans incl.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDIP Tracker (Quarterly) • Frequency aligned to services monitoring/reporting
<p>Work with the care markets to understand capacity and demand for long-term care for people living with dementia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market shaping strategy reflects the demand and capacity required to support people living with dementia • Care markets and commissioners have a shared understanding of “complex” needs for people living with dementia • Individual care and support plans are based on a shared understanding across the domains of complexity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA procurement/commissioning teams • Market shaping programme 	<p>ECC Bed tracker Align to market shaping strategy action plans (timescales to be confirmed)</p>
<p>Work with the care markets to understand the scale of ‘complex’ needs for people living with dementia and whether separate commissioning is required</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA market shaping strategy deliverables • Number of people supported to access appropriate care • Reduction in the number of “hand-backs” • Care markets and commissioner's agree domains of complexity and impact on commissioned services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA procurement/commissioning teams • Market shaping programme 	<p>Align to market shaping strategy action plans (timescales to be confirmed)</p>
<p>Priority 9 – End of life: People with dementia and their families plan ahead, receive good end of life care and are able to die in accordance with their wishes</p>			

Commitment 10 – We will work with families, communities and palliative specialists to improve information that enables families to plan ahead to make informed decisions that support individuals to remain cared for in their preferred care setting

<p>Work with health partners to enhance choice, aid delivery of person-centred end of life care, help to guide care when mental capacity is lost and provide support for families and carers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are given opportunities and supported to have early conversations about advanced care and treatment options, including but not limited to faith and culture, to allow for informed decision-making, and providing a person-centred approach to allow for individuals to remain cared for in their preferred care setting • Number of organisations working towards/achieving gold standard frameworks • Increase the number of people with advance care plans (ACPs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAs incl, Adult Social Care • CCGs/ICS • District/Borough & Local Councils • Voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners • LA/CCG/ICS Commissioned services 	<p>Annual report incl. NHS Patient Experience Survey Healthwatch surveys Commissioned services monitoring and performance reporting (as per contracted performance requirements)</p>
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Annex B: Wider Initiatives Linked to Dementia Strategy Priorities

Priority Area	Initiative	Organisation/s involved
Prevention	Dementia Friendly Schools / Essex Healthy Schools Programme – aimed at primary and secondary school children to learn more about dementia and take part in dementia related activities	Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service and Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service
	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) – with overall aims to improve health and wellbeing of all Essex residents	Essex county/district/city councils
	Find Your Active – taking regular physical exercise is one of the best things to reduce the risk of getting dementia	Active Essex, Sport England and Essex County Council
	Essex Wellbeing Service – help and support to make lifestyle changes, find support and access community groups and activities	Essex County Council and collaboration of local organisations and services
	The Prevention and Enablement Model (PEM) – 12-month ‘test and learn’ pilot, to see how the health and social care system in Essex can use physical activity to enable independence, improve population health and develop communities that are inclusive	Active Essex, Sport England and Essex County Council
Supporting unpaid carers	Superfast Essex – ECCs subsidised broadband programme to improve connectivity throughout the county	Essex County Council
	Dementia Interpreters – offers an understanding dementia specific communication and understanding how to translate the 'language of dementia'.	West Essex CCG and North East Essex CCG
	Carers First – offers online help and advice as well as practical and emotional support, local support groups and wellbeing activities	Essex County Council and Carers First
	Community Dementia Support Service – information hubs, peer support groups, and community, including online activities to support anyone affected by dementia	Essex County Council commissioned and delivered through The Alzheimer’s Society
	Other Halves – project covering mid-Essex with local people organising activities and supporting one another	Other Halves
	Time for you – fund to enable carers to have time away from direct caring responsibilities	Colchester and Tendring CVSs
	Dementia Support Workers – Essex Community Dementia Support Service	Essex County Council
	Information Hubs/Dementia Cafes – several available across Essex to help people live well in the community	Local Groups, Dementia Action Alliances, Essex County Council and The Alzheimer’s Society
	Robotic Companion Pets – offer an alternative to traditional pet therapy to support management of distressed behaviours providing comfort, stimulation, and interaction for people in their own homes	North East Essex CCG and Age Well East. Mid & South Integrated Care Partnership

	Guardian Angel initiative – to help people with dementia stay safe while maintain their independence through use of wristbands, badges, hand tags and keyrings with the individuals first name and emergency contact information	Dementia Buddy, backed by Essex County Council, Thurrock Council, Southend City Council and wider systems
A knowledgeable and skilled workforce	Sector Development Strategy – identifying 5 county-wide economic growth sectors to provide 13,000 jobs	Essex County Council and key system partners
	North East Essex CCG Health and Care Academy Programme – aimed at 14–18-year-olds	North East Essex CCG
	Pathways to Diagnostics Trailblazer – offering jobseekers support to gaining a career with the NHS	East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT) and the Colchester Institute
	The Advanced Dementia Mobility Experience Essex (TADMEE) Experiential training suite adult social care, advanced HEE L3	Essex Social Care Academy (ESCA) and Essex County Council
	Dementia Integrated Clinical Lead - closer integrated working practices between the MAS and Primary Care North East Essex to facilitate increased Dementia Diagnosis Rates	North East Essex CCG. Pilots underway across Mid & South Essex Integrated Care Partnership (ICP)
	Local Council elected Member Training Programme – Development of learning points and curriculum for elected members to enable members to undertake statutory duties with an understanding of the implications/potential impact for people living with dementia in their communities.	Essex County Council, Dementia Friendly Community Coordinator and the Essex Association of Local Councils
	EQUIP Audit – understanding the challenges in primary care and supporting practices to facilitate timelier diagnosis and knowledge to ensure the practice population living with dementia have access to appropriate care and support	North East Essex CCG, Mid & South Essex CCGs
Finding information and advice	Dementia Connect Essex – community dementia support service for anyone affected by dementia	Essex County Council and the Alzheimer's Society
	Dementia Adventure – training and information for families and friends providing practical hints, tips and connections	Essex County Council
	Dementia Directory – to find a range of support available in local areas	Alzheimer's Society
	Essex Map – local activities, group and opportunities for people to be active and engaged in their local communities	Essex County Council
Diagnosis and support	Mid Essex Community Specialist Nurses – including their role in facilitating diagnosis within the community/people's homes	Mid Essex CCG, Dengie Neighbourhood team
	Dementia Intensive Support Models – various models of intensive support	Essex Partnership University Trust (EPUT), North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT)
	Dementia Diagnostic Review – to understand priority areas for improving dementia diagnosis rates and pathways in North East Essex	North East Essex CCG

	Memory Service National Accreditation Programme (MSNAP) – to improve assessment, diagnostic and care for people with dementia and their carers	EPUT
Living well with dementia in the community	Essex Year of Reading – part of a countywide campaign to improve educational attainment of children and young people and enabling older generations to remain connected to communities through the Essex Dementia Intergenerational programme	Essex Education Taskforce at Essex County Council and respective district/borough/city councils
	Dementia Friendly GPs – providing information and signposting needed to access support, holding responsibility for care plans and reviews for ongoing management	Essex County Council, CCGs, Southend City Council, Thurrock Council and North, Mid and South Essex
	Dementia Friendly Communities – to enhance understanding, respect and support for those affected by dementia (with best practice examples to learn from as demonstrated by Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council Dementia Action Plan	Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council and Ingatestone and Fryerning Dementia Friendly Community Partnership
	The WayBack VR – a virtual reality film series designed for those living with dementia and their carers used to trigger intact memories and stimulate conversations	Essex County Council
	Memory Café – Essex County Council marked Dementia Action Week 2022 with the opening of the first Memory Café in Harwich Library to support people living with dementia, their family, friends and carers	Essex County Council and Harwich Library
	Admiral Nurses – registered nurses who specialise in dementia, helping family carers gain the necessary skills to assist with dementia care, promoting positive approaches in living well with dementia and improving quality of life	North East Essex CCG and EPUT
Living well in long-term care	Robotic pets in care homes – providing care home residents with comfort, interaction, and stimulation in the absence of visitors	Mid and South Essex Care Partnership
	Enhanced Care Home Liaison Nurses (ECHLN) – to improve quality and access to primary care for residents in residential and nursing homes through a proactive and preventative approach to improved health outcomes	North East Essex and EPUT
	Interactive Tables & The light Project - to create a dementia friendly Care System with continuity of care at its heart, offering secure, safe and therapeutic environments where patients with Dementia, LD, ABI and other such complex conditions are cared for with more than their physical needs being met.	Mid and South Essex Care Partnership
	Prosper Programme – improve safety and reduce harm for vulnerable care home residents, who are at particular risk of admission to hospital or significant deterioration in their health and quality of life	Essex County Council
End of life	Palliative Care Gold Standard Framework - evidence-based end of life care service improvement programme, identifying the right people, promoting the right care, in the right place, at the right time, every time. The training is for generalist front-line care providers.	St Helena Hospice

	My Care Choices/Single Point – a care coordination hub for out of hospital end of life care for people in the last year of life to increase support to maintain patients in their usual place of residence	St Helena Hospice, North East Essex.
	Namaste training – alternative therapies for people living with dementia in hospice and hospital settings	Princes Alexandra Hospital and various hospices across Essex
	My Care Choices – end of life planning tool to ensure individual choices and wishes are supported	CCGs across Southend, Essex and Thurrock
	Specialist dementia care and support – for those living with dementia and their families at end of life	Farleigh Hospice
Health and wellbeing	Neighbourhoods model – an integrated model of care to deliver outcomes and tackle inequality using neighbourhood teams, currently being rolled out in Colchester and South Tendring	North East Essex Health and Wellbeing Alliance
	Pedal Power – in partnership with Active Essex (with Clacton and Jaywick as Essex pilots) which allow residents to apply for a free bike	Active Essex and Pedal Power
	Dancing with Dementia – creative dance classes that focus on stimulation of the brain through movement, repetition, props and musical timelines	Dance Network Association and Active Essex

Annex C: The Impact of Dementia; Data and Insights

The impact of dementia

It is estimated that the dementia diagnosis rate in England for people aged 65 and over in 2021 was 61.6% or 415,778 people¹⁵. Only 34% of adults believe it's possible to reduce their risk of dementia, with smoking given as one of the greatest risk factors due to its narrowing of the blood vessels in the heart and brain, and oxidative stress, which damages the brain¹⁶.

The impact of Dementia on the population is...1 in 3 people born in the UK will develop dementia

Whilst dementia is commonly associated with older people, there are more than 40,000 people under the age of 65 in the UK affected by dementia.

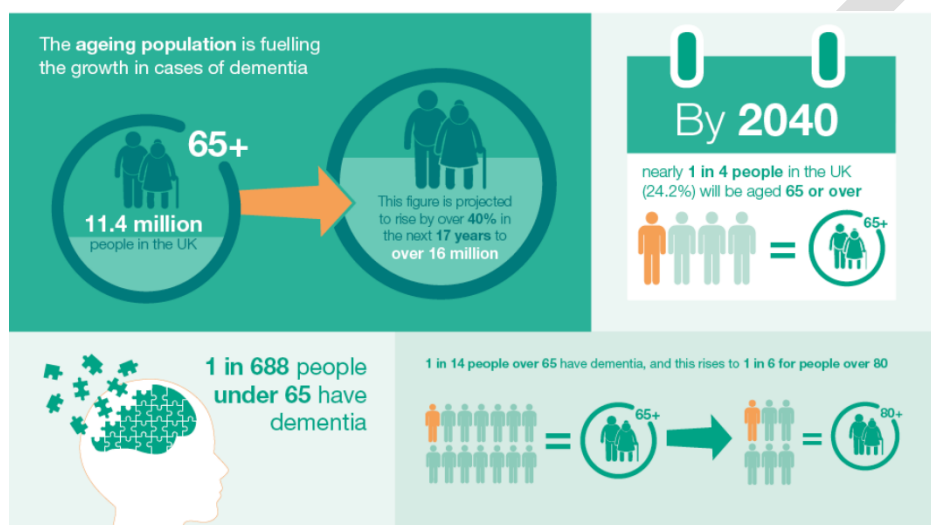


Image 3, source – Public Health England¹⁷

Impact on Carers:

An estimated 540,000 people in England act as primary carers for people with dementia; half of these are employed, 112,540 have needed to leave employment to meet their caring roles and 66,000 carers have cut their working hours. This results in a lower standard of living for those carers and significant costs to society in general, including a £3.2 billion cost of working time lost to caring¹⁸.

Impact on Emergency Care Services

The number of people with dementia admitted to hospital in an emergency rose by 70% between 2012 and 2018. Around a fifth of these admissions related to potentially preventable acute conditions such as urinary tract infections, pneumonia and other respiratory infections¹⁹.

¹⁵ Fingertips, Public Health data: *dementia profile* <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/mental-health/profile/dementia/data#page/1>

¹⁶ Government guidance, *Dementia: applying All Our Health*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dementia-applying-all-our-health/dementia-applying-all-our-health>

¹⁷ Public Health England: *health matters: midlife approaches to reduce dementia risk* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-midlife-approaches-to-reduce-dementia-risk/health-matters-midlife-approaches-to-reduce-dementia-risk>

¹⁸ Government guidance, *Dementia: applying All Our Health*, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dementia-applying-all-our-health/dementia-applying-all-our-health>

¹⁹ Ibid

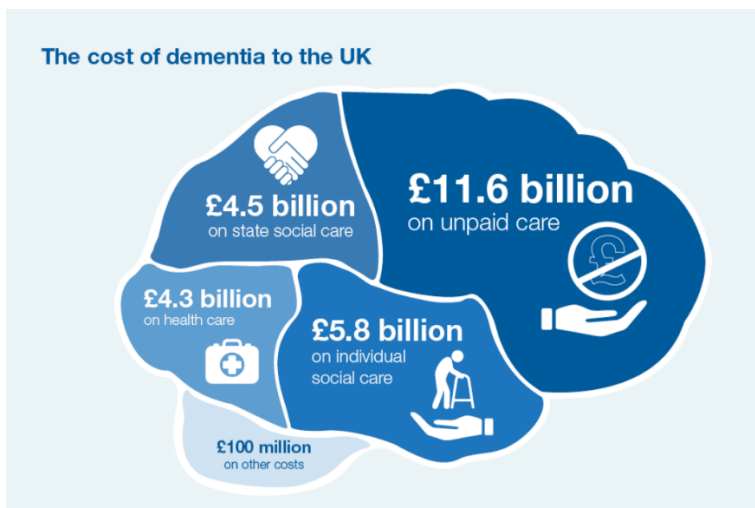


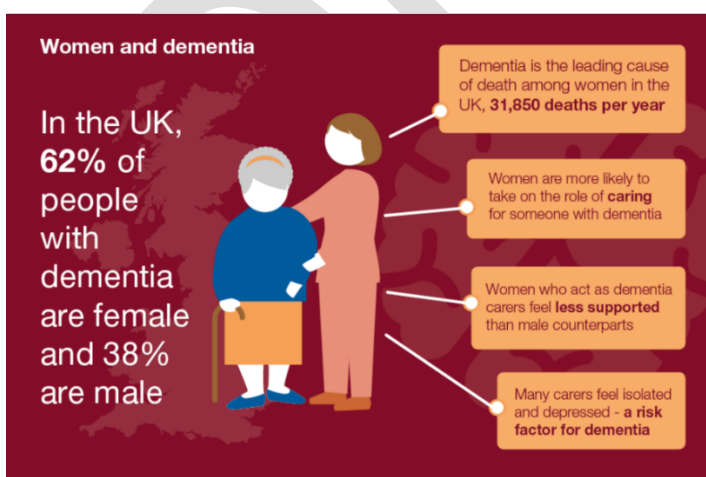
Image 4, source – Public Health England²⁰

Impact on an individual’s quality of life:

Public Health England suggests that 60% of people with dementia are more likely to be lonely. Approximately 60% of people with dementia go out of their houses less than once a week and in sparsely-populated rural areas, it is harder for older people living alone to find the opportunity to mix with others.

We know that Essex has an increasing older population and nationally up to 14% of older people (for Essex that’s over 33,000 people) report feeling lonely all the time. With loneliness increasing the risk of dementia by up to 50% and those who are socially isolated more likely to enter residential or nursing care early, this is a pressing issue for Essex.

Some studies suggest that people from Black African, Black Caribbean and South Asian ethnic groups are more likely to get dementia than people from White ethnic groups, with a recent study identifying Black ethnic groups in London as having the highest risk, with links to diabetes and cardiovascular disease prevalence in such groups given as a possible cause²¹. Although, it is argued that more evidence is needed to determine ethnicity as a significant risk factor for dementia.



²⁰ Public Health England: *health matters: midlife approaches to reduce dementia risk*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-midlife-approaches-to-reduce-dementia-risk/health-matters-midlife-approaches-to-reduce-dementia-risk>

²¹ Alzheimer’s Society factsheet: *risk factors for dementia 2021* [factsheet_risk_factors_for_dementia.pdf](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/factsheet_risk_factors_for_dementia.pdf)
[alzheimers.org.uk](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

Image 5, source – Public Health England²²

Impact on Women:

Dementia has been the leading cause of death for women in the UK since 2011 and, while women have a longer life expectancy than men, not only are they at greater risk of dementia, but they are also more likely to be impacted in other areas of their lives such as through caregiving to a family member with dementia, financial stability, mental wellbeing and career progression²³.

Impact on Adults with Learning Disabilities:

Adults with learning disabilities are at increased risk of developing dementia as they age, compared to those without a learning disability (about 13% in the 60- to 65-year-old age group compared to 1% in the general population²⁴), although the figures vary according to how the diagnosis is made.

Around 1 in 5 adults with a learning disability who are over the age of 65 will develop dementia. People with learning disabilities who develop dementia generally do so at a younger age, across all over 60 age groups the prevalence was estimated at 2 to 3 times greater for those with learning disabilities, with a third of adults with Down Syndrome developing dementia in their 50s.

The importance of dementia awareness:

Dementia does not just impact the person – everyone around them, from family members to friends, is affected in some way. The impact on those living with dementia, including their family and carers, cannot be underestimated and demonstrates the need for a whole system approach to awareness, care and support including diagnosis. 1 in 3 people born in the UK will develop dementia in their lifetime, the importance of increased awareness and understanding of dementia throughout our communities again, cannot be underestimated given the anticipated rise in the number of people living with dementia.

The potential to reduce the risk of dementia to our population:

Around 40% of dementia cases might be attributable to potentially modifiable risk factors. A 20% reduction in risk factors per decade could reduce the UK prevalence by 16.2% (300,000 cases) by 2050²⁵. The Lancet Commission²⁶ offer 12 modifiable risk factors for dementia as:

1. Hypertension (high blood pressure)
2. Obesity
3. Smoking
4. Physical inactivity
5. Diabetes
6. Depression
7. Lack of education in early life
8. Social isolation
9. Hearing loss
10. Alcohol consumption >21 units per week
11. Air pollution
12. Traumatic brain injury

²² Public Health England: *health matters: midlife approaches to reduce dementia risk* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-midlife-approaches-to-reduce-dementia-risk/health-matters-midlife-approaches-to-reduce-dementia-risk>

²³ Alzheimer's Society: *The Impact of Dementia on Women* <https://www.alzheimersresearchuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/The-Impact-of-Dementia-on-Women-ARUK-report.pdf>

²⁴ Gov: *Dementia and people with learning disabilities: making reasonable adjustments guidance* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-with-dementia-and-learning-disabilities-reasonable-adjustments/dementia-and-people-with-learning-disabilities>

²⁵ Source – Gov guidance: *Health matters: midlife approaches to reduce dementia risk* available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-midlife-approaches-to-reduce-dementia-risk/health-matters-midlife-approaches-to-reduce-dementia-risk>

²⁶ The Lancet: *Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2020 report of Lancet Commission* [https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736\(20\)30367-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736(20)30367-6/fulltext)

Health and social care professionals are an integral part of a whole-system approach to promoting key messages to citizens to help reduce their risk of getting dementia. Key messages include

- Be more physically active
- Eat healthily and maintain a healthy weight
- Drink less alcohol
- Stop smoking
- Be socially active
- Control diabetes and high blood pressure

Dementia in Essex

Dementia is not a natural part of ageing and as noted, does not just affect older people. As of March 2022, NHS Digital²⁷ state there are 15,280 diagnosed people living with dementia in SET. However, it is estimated that there are another 9,000 undiagnosed people living with dementia.

Most recent figures from NHS Digital highlight that there are 24,578 people (over 65) in SET living with dementia, with a 33% increase predicted, resulting in 34,560 people by 2030. 64% of those diagnosed are female and 70% are aged 80+ (48% are both female and aged 80+) as illustrated below.

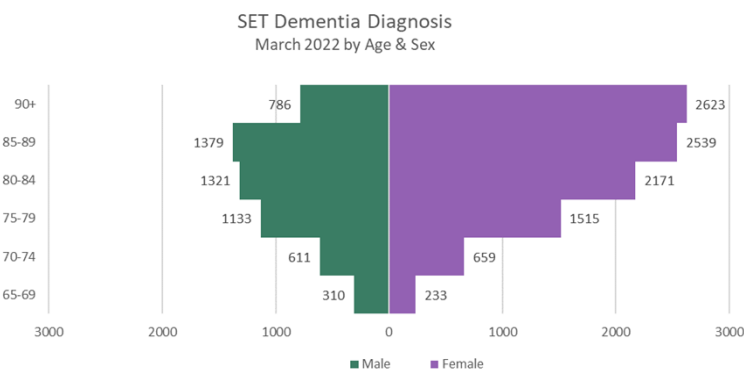
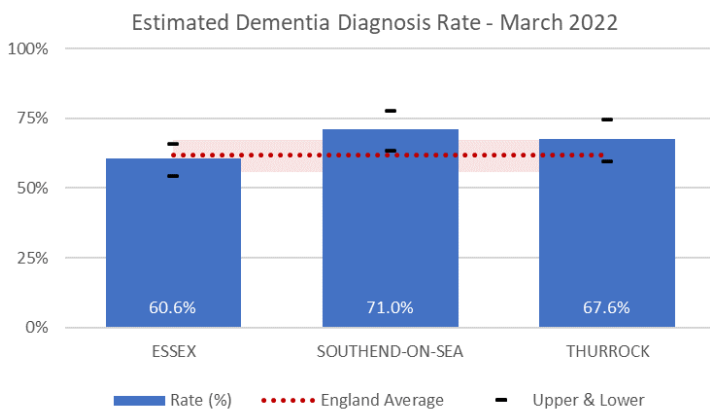


Image 6 NHS Digital March 2022, recorded dementia diagnosis

Dementia diagnosis rates in Essex remain below the national average (62%).



²⁷ NHS Digital, *recorded dementia diagnosis* <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-collections-and-data-sets/data-collections/quality-and-outcomes-framework-qof/quality-and-outcome-framework-qof-business-rules/recorded-dementia-diagnoses>

Image 7 NHS Digital March 2022, estimated dementia diagnosis

Additionally, in Essex:

- Old age dependency ratio: currently equivalent to 335.6 people aged 65+ being economically inactive to every 1,000 working age people. In Southend, this is 310. These are both higher than the national average and whilst this is lower in Thurrock, these are all predicted to increase
- If the prevalence remains constant, for SET as a whole, there will be an additional 10,554 people aged 65+ with dementia in 2030
- In 2020/21 the cost to Adult Social Care in Essex for supporting people living with dementia was £42.3 million – by 2030 this is estimated to increase by 30% to £55 million
- A person's risk of developing dementia rises from one in 14 over the age of 65, to one in six over the age of 80
- Approximately 40% of people living with dementia over the age of 65 are living in care homes – in Essex, by 2030 this will equate to around 13,824 people
- People living with dementia who are over 65 have on average four comorbidities, while people without dementia have on average two and 91.8% of people living with dementia have another health condition
- People living with dementia will generally be supported by higher-cost care packages, whether they are at home or in residential care
- The Alzheimer's Society projected the cost of dementia to Southend, Essex and Thurrock for 2020 to be £1,110 million

The impact of Covid-19

Covid-19 had a significant impact on the most vulnerable members of our communities, placing additional pressures on unpaid carers which in turn had an impact on people living dementia.

During this time, approaches used included an increased focus on the use of social media channels and digital technologies to facilitate one to one conversations with people, virtual dementia awareness sessions and increased opportunities for communities to come together virtually via the Dementia Action Alliances.

Lived experience research and insight undertaken in 2020 by Adult Social Care, local systems and Covid-19 recovery teams highlighted feedback from those living with dementia, to include:

- Disruption to normal routines
- Lack of cognitive stimulation
- Feeling loneliness, stress and anxiety
- Fear of being abandoned
- Physical and mental deterioration
- Risk of premature admission to residential care
- Risky behaviours
- Self-neglect
- Improved wellbeing when supported by carers, friends and neighbours
- Acts of kindness from the community

The same feedback highlighted the voice of carers, which echoed much of the above, as well as:

- Disruption of routines and loss of services
- An increase in caring responsibilities

- No respite, reduced respite pool – informal means of support not available
- Lack of awareness of support and entitlement to it
- No access to internet or not comfortable using it/digitally disenfranchised
- Not receiving timely/appropriate information
- Finding isolation difficult not just because of impact on the cared for but also on their own mental health and wellbeing

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Annex D: Additional Information & Useful Links

For further information on any of the content in this strategy, please contact the Dementia Team dementia.team@essex.gov.uk

Alternative format versions of the strategy are available upon request.

Useful links

- Essex County Council: Adult Social Care website, *Dementia: recognising the signs* <https://www.essex.gov.uk/dementia/recognising-the-signs-of-dementia>
- Southend-on-Sea City Council: *Dementia services in Southend* <https://www.southend.gov.uk/specialist-support/dementia>
- Thurrock Council: *Memory loss and dementia* <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/memory-loss-and-dementia/dementia>
- Alzheimer's Society: *Dementia connect Essex – community dementia support service* <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/support-services/Mid+Essex+Local+Services/Dementia+Connect+Essex+-+Community+Dementia+Support+Service/regional>
- Dementia Action Alliance: *Pan Essex Dementia Action Alliance* https://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/local_alliances/13290_pan_essex_dementia_action_alliance

Annex E: Glossary: Terms and Abbreviations

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Meeting Planner
Health and Wellbeing Board

HWB Membership

Elected members

- Cllr D Huelin (Chair),
- Cllr B Johnson, Cllr S Ralph, Cllr S Liddiard, Cllr S Muldowney

Elected member substitutions as agreed at Full Council on 29 June 2022 comprise:

- Cllr Carter
- Cllr Halden

Wider membership

- Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health * (Ian Wake)
- Corporate Director of Children's Services * (Sheila Murphy)
- Director of Public Health* (Jo Broadbent)
- Executive Lead Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership & Joint Accountable Officer for its 5 CCGs (Anthony McKeever)*
- NHS Thurrock Alliance Director (Interim), MSE ICP (Stephen Porter)
- Chief Operating Officer HealthWatch Thurrock * (Kim James)
- Chair: Thurrock NHS Clinical Commissioning Group or a clinical representative from the Board (Dr Anil Kallil)
- Chair Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Board / Director Public Realm (Julie Rogers)
- Chair of the Adult Safeguarding Partnership or their senior representative (Jim Nicholson)
- Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership or their senior representative (Sheila Murphy)
- Director level representation of Thurrock, North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) (Gill Burns)
- Partnership Director, Thurrock Council, NELFT and EPUT (Rita Thakaria)
- Executive member, (Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust) Hannah Coffey / Michelle Stapleton)
- Executive Director of Community Services and Partnerships, Essex Partnership University Trust (EPUT) (Alex Green)
- Chief Executive Thurrock CVS (Kristina Jackson)
- Managing Director Fiona Ryan. Basildon & Thurrock University Hospital Trust
- **HM Prison and Probation Service (Karen Grinney – MARTIN LUCAS – EMAIL TO ASK)**
- **Essex Police (Jenny Barnett CH/SUPT 42081127 <Jenny.Barnett@essex.police.uk>)**

Operation matters regarding Health and Wellbeing Board

- Meetings are organised bi-monthly on a Friday morning
- One quarter of the whole number of Board Members, provided that in no case shall the quorum of a Committee be less than three
- Meetings will be hybrid, all members of the Board who are council officers and representatives must attend in person. Members attending virtually can provide feedback but cannot formally vote on matters arising.
- Officers presenting at Board can do so virtually
- Meetings must be recorded as the Board is a formal committee of the council
- Meetings are public – members of the public can watch virtual meetings live on the council website. Any questions from the public must be requested prior to the meeting and will be considered on the discretion of the Chair.
- Items that are presented to Board to be considered virtually in the first instance and should Board wish the item to be scheduled at a future meeting that will be arranged by Secretariat.

Meeting date and time	Agenda Items	Deadlines
Rearranged for Friday 5 August.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome and introductions 2. Minutes / Action Log 3. Urgent items 4. Declaration of Interests <u>Timing items 1-4 25 minutes (10:30-10:55am)</u> 5. Housing Strategy (Ewelina Sorbjan / Ryan Farmer) <u>Timing 30 minutes (10:55 – 11:25am)</u> 6. Children Looked After Needs Assessment (Elozona). electronically (30 minutes) (TBD 11:25 noon – 11:55) 7. Essex Southend and Thurrock Dementia Strategy refresh. Catherine Wilson attending. Item will focus on draft refreshed dementia strategy and commitment to develop Thurrock place based plan. <u>Timing 25 minutes (11:55:12.20)</u> 8. Virtual items for members' consideration <u>Timing 5 minutes (12:20-12:25)</u> 9. Work plan <u>Timing 5 minutes (12:25-12:30)</u> 	<p>Publication date Thursday 28</p> <p>Tuesday 19 July is Implications</p> <p>Agenda agreed and papers requested Thursday 7 July. Invitation to attend meeting extended to guests Friday 8 July</p>

Items to be considered virtually

1. **LeDeR Annual Report 2019-20** update. Rebekah Baillie

Meeting date and time	Agenda Items	Deadlines
<p>28 October 2022 10:30-12:30</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome and introductions 2. Minutes / Action Log 3. Urgent items 4. Declaration of Interests <u>Timing items 1-4 30 minutes</u> 5. 2 HWB Strategy Domains in focus - setting out plans for delivery – Most relevant and most concern. <u>Timing 90 minutes (45 minutes per domain)</u> Domain 1 Domain 6 6. Any of the following items Timing 30 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICS Inequalities Strategy (MSE) <u>Timing 30 minutes (11:30-12:00 noon) – Deferred from August Meeting (email sent to Sophie on 6 July to confirm)</u> • Maternal Obesity JSNA – Yes • Annual Public Health Report Jo Broadbend • Review of Thurrock HWB – Final Report (Sian Lockwood) • Initial Health Assessments (requested by Laura Holland Merton, leads Janet Simon / Dan Jones). Asked for more information about the report and flagged it may be deferred until December. Waiting for further advice. 7. Items considered virtually <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (Juliet Brabben) 	<p>Approached to include ICS inequalities strategy on agenda by sophia.morris@nhs.net</p> <p>Publish 20 October Papers for Implications 10 October Papers requested Friday 30 September</p>

Items considered virtually

Meeting date and time	Agenda Items	Deadlines
9 December 2022 10:30-12:30	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome and introductions 2. Minutes / Action Log 3. Urgent items 4. Declaration of Interests <u>Timing items 1-4 30 minutes</u> 5. 2 HWB Strategy Domains in focus - setting out plans for delivery <u>Timing 90 minutes (45 minutes per domain)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domain 3 • Domain 5 6. Item to be determined – Under doctoring in Thurrock. Or focussed session on carers and the new action plan (once developed) (see email on onpaid carers / informal carers from Cllr Huelin and Ian in HWB Planning category <u>Timing 30 minutes</u> 7. Items considered virtually 	

Meeting date and time	Agenda Items	Deadlines
10 February 10:30-12:30	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome and introductions 2. Minutes / Action Log 3. Urgent items 4. Declaration of Interests <u>Timing items 1-4 30 minutes</u> 5. 2 HWB Strategy Domains in focus - setting out plans for delivery <u>Timing 90 minutes (45 minutes per domain)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domain 2 and domain 4 6. Item to be determined <u>Timing 30 minutes</u> 	

Items considered at meetings during the 2022/23 Municipal Year

Meeting date and time	Agenda Items	Deadlines
24 June 2022 10:30-12:30	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome and introductions 2. Urgent items 3. Declaration of Interests 4. Minutes <u>Items 1-4 15 minutes (10:30-10:45)</u> 5. HWB Annual review of TOR <u>Timing 15 minutes (10:45-11:00)</u> 6. Better Care Together Thurrock - The Case for Further Change (Ian Wake / Ceri Armstrong) <u>Timing 45 minutes (11:00 – 11:45)</u> 7. HWB Strategy (Jo Broadbent) <u>Timing 45 minutes 11:45-12:30</u> 	<p>Imps Wed 8 June Publish 16 June</p> <p>Agenda agreed by Cllr Huelin on 31 May.</p> <p>Invitations sent to members 31 May 2022.</p>

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