

Thurrock Health And Wellbeing Strategy

2022-2026

Levelling the Playing Field
in Thurrock



Created through the partnership of Thurrock Health and Wellbeing Board



Introduction and overview report to Thurrock Health
and Wellbeing Board

Domain 5 Housing and the Environment

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Domain Aims and Ambitions

To ensure 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. The aim is to make homes and places in Thurrock, environments where everyone feels safe, healthy, connected and proud.

What we want to achieve

In Thurrock, the increase in house prices has been greater than in surrounding areas, which has a knock-on impact on people seeking rental properties, the cost of rents and the availability of social housing. It can be challenging for some residents of Thurrock to afford high quality, suitable, secure homes. We want housing across the borough to be affordable and of good quality, and for all people across the borough to have access to a high-quality environment and open spaces.

The aim is for people on low incomes, in receipt of benefits and living in more deprived wards to have improved access to high quality, suitable homes and high-quality environments. We want to reduce the numbers of people at risk of homelessness and improve the opportunities for people who are homeless to move to better housing solutions.

How this Domain levels the playing field

This will Level the Playing Field by:

- Ensuring fewer people will be at risk of homelessness and those who are, will have access to a variety of support options to improve their life circumstances
- The quality of low cost private rental properties and social housing being improved, so that residents on low income and in receipt of benefits will be at less risk of poor health due to their housing
- People who have or are experiencing domestic and/or sexual abuse being able to move to homes that allow them to move on from their experiences
- More people choosing to walk or cycle in Thurrock – supporting both physical and mental health
- People living in more deprived areas of Thurrock having better access to good quality parks and open spaces, making it easy to exercise and be active
- Reducing antisocial behaviour in all communities
- Ensuring communities are connected and resilient, and the built environment is designed to support people to live health and active lives
- Ensuring fewer households experience fuel poverty and the associated health impacts

Domain 5 Housing and the Environment



Domain Goals

- **5A Reduce homelessness and increase the supply of affordable housing in Thurrock**
- **5B Facilitate and encourage maintenance of good quality homes in Thurrock to promote the health of residents, protecting them from hazards such as cold, damp and mould**
- **5C Provide safe, suitable and stable housing solutions for people who have or who are experiencing domestic abuse/violence and/or sexual abuse/violence**
- **5D Regeneration and future developments will seek to improve physical and mental health, reduce exposure to air pollution, reduce antisocial behaviour and to build community resilience**

Goal 5A Reduce homelessness and increase the supply of affordable housing in Thurrock



What we want to achieve

All Thurrock residents to have a secure, stable and affordable home.

Some key challenges

There have been significant changes in the housing market in Thurrock that have led to increased challenges surrounding affordability in the borough for both residents attempting to find secure accommodation and for the council to fulfil its rehousing duty. For example:

- Between 2014 and 2019 the average house price increased by 50%, a greater rise compared to other parts of the East of England.
- Approximately 52.9% of Thurrock households would not meet the affordability requirements to purchase the smallest types of property available on the housing market.
- The average weekly cost to rent in Thurrock has also increased over the past five years.
- Current local housing allowance rates are not sufficient for average rental values in Thurrock.
- A number of households are being placed in Thurrock by other local authorities, either within temporary accommodation or as a final placement. This impacts upon the availability of accommodation for the council to secure as accommodation for its own residents, but also has an impact on the resources of other local partners.

The outcome of these challenges is:

- Homelessness and people being at risk of homelessness has increased in Thurrock since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018.
- Thurrock has a greater rate of households owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act compared to the England average (16.9 per 1,000 in Thurrock versus 12.3 per 1,000 England average)
- The proportion of the population renting from the council is much higher than the regional average.
- While many people are living in privately owned homes, there is a significant proportion of people who are unable to afford their own homes or who are unable to privately rent. This means there is an increased risk of home insecurity within this group, an increased risk of eviction, increased risk of overcrowding or poor living conditions and an increased risk of homelessness. All of these may contribute towards poor health.

Goal 5A Reduce homelessness and increase the supply of affordable housing in Thurrock



How we will achieve this Goal

This priority will primarily be achieved by:

- Identifying people at risk of homelessness early, preventing homelessness by adopting a holistic offer across services, and addressing the health and wellbeing needs of this group. This will focus on enabling people to progress to housing that offers more security, stability and is more suitable for their needs than their current situation delivers.
- Provide appropriate and timely support for people experiencing rough sleeping and homelessness by sharing knowledge between partners to help identify those individuals. By reducing out of borough Temporary Accommodation (TA) placements and reducing time in TA to the statutory two months.
- 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. Consideration should be given to affordable rents, establishing Thurrock Affordable Rent levels, and matching social housing supply to demand.
- Development should be encouraged to include shared ownership and first homes as suitable affordable housing products for Thurrock residents who wish to own their own homes, alongside key worker housing.
- Introduce and maintain a 'Thurrock Affordability Standard' to direct future policy design and housing delivery, including council-owned affordable rental properties.
- The Local Plan will identify major development sites across the borough that are capable of delivering 10 or more additional homes and set out targets for the mix of units in terms of type, size and tenure.

What will we do differently under this strategy?

- Deliver appropriate and timely support by reducing out of area Temporary Accommodation (TA) placements and reducing the time spent in TA placements
- Introduce a 'Thurrock Affordability Standard' for future housing delivery ensuring 35% of new units are affordable housing, alongside increasing council-owned affordable rental properties.

Goal 5B. Facilitate and encourage maintenance of good quality homes in Thurrock to promote the health of residents



What we want to achieve

All Thurrock residents will live in homes that are suitable for their needs, keep them healthy and protect them from hazards such as cold, damp and mould.

Some key challenges

There are some key challenges around the thermal efficiency of Thurrock's housing stock:

- The performance of the housing stock in Thurrock compared to the England average as set out in the English Housing Survey (EHS) is mixed. The social housing stock is generally better than the private sector stock. This tends to be thermally efficient and better insulated owing to the requirements placed on social housing providers. The private rented stock has a higher proportion of low income households compared to the owner-occupied stock.

The outcome of these challenges is that:

- We need to focus on improving the least energy efficient housing stock occupied by low income and vulnerable households. Although this is challenging it would contribute to progressing towards the Government target of improving as many fuel poor homes as reasonably practical to Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) band C by 2030, with an interim milestone of band D by 2025.



Goal 5B. Facilitate and encourage maintenance of good quality homes in Thurrock to promote the health of residents

How we will achieve this Goal

The priority will be achieved through collaboration with private sector landlord and utilising the Well homes initiative as a baseline for these discussions.

Specific aims for this priority include:

- Ensuring that all properties are of good condition (safe, suitable) in the public sector and also work with private sector landlords to achieve this through the Well Homes initiative. This will increase renewable technologies in council stock and support the council's green agenda to reduce carbon emissions and undertaking options appraisal for wider estate regeneration to improve the quality of homes and neighbourhoods for residents.
- Ensuring that new homes are developed that will keep people well and independent. Based on recognised quality design standards e.g. Sport England Active by Design and Police Secure by Design policies.

What will we do differently under this strategy?

- We will influence the quality of private housing stock through work such as the Well Homes programme and ensuring that these programmes reach priority groups such as people living with long term conditions, mental health needs and learning disabilities.
- We will target and remove significant health and safety hazards from private rental sector properties by using the full extent of enforcement powers available to the council
- We will reduce fuel poverty by investing in council housing and accessing the Green Homes Grant to make energy improvements to the private housing sector, or by incentivizing improved EPC ratings across the borough.

Goal 5C. Provide safe, suitable and stable housing solutions for people who have or who are experiencing domestic abuse/violence and/or sexual abuse/violence

What we want to achieve

To provide safe and secure homes for people who have or who are experiencing domestic abuse and/or sexual abuse allowing them to move on from their experiences.

Some key challenges

Some of the specific challenges regarding the provision of safe and stable housing for those fleeing abuse include:

- A lack of safe accommodation to meet the demand of specific groups.
- No long term funding to extend safe accommodation buildings.
- 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.

The outcome of these challenges is that:

- The scale of the number of housing units needed is not accurate due to the underreporting of domestic abuse/violence and/or sexual abuse/violence in some sectors of the community.
- Lack of funds and suitable housing units for both immediate safety and for longer term needs for victims/survivors may hinder their ability to move on from their experiences and in extreme cases leave them at risk of further abuse.



Goal 5C. Provide safe, suitable and stable housing solutions for people who have or who are experiencing domestic abuse/violence and/or sexual abuse/violence

How we will achieve this Goal

The key delivery mechanisms for this priority are through streamlining support both in terms of funding and providing a single resource for those that have or who are experiencing domestic abuse/violence and/or sexual abuse/violence. Specific actions include:

- Delivering 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.
- Reviewing and revising the existing protocol for supporting those at risk of homelessness because they are fleeing domestic and sexual abuse. We will ensure access to a range of housing options and initiatives tailored for domestic abuse to give people experiencing domestic and sexual abuse or violence the choice to either relocate or remain in their existing accommodation.
- Improve public awareness of how victims/survivors can seek housing support.

What will we do differently under this strategy?

- Through the implementation of Thurrock Council's new Housing Domestic Abuse Policy, ensure that all relevant council departments are aware and applying this. The policy will reflect the challenges of supporting individuals to maintain networks of friend and community relationships.
- The financial support offer will be streamlined by combining three funding streams from Thurrock Women's Refuge, the Brighter Futures Programme and Safe Accommodation new burdens fund to create one services provider.



Goal 5D. Regeneration and future developments will seek to improve physical and mental health

What we want to achieve

Access to green spaces will increase physical activity, promote mental wellbeing and reduce exposure to air pollution for residents. A high quality built and green environment will support net-zero ambitions, promote community resilience and social capital, and reduce antisocial behaviour.

Some key challenges

- ONS analysis found that people on lower incomes report greater dissatisfaction with the quality of their green space than those on higher incomes. The study suggested the quality of nearby green space might have affected the way people spent their time during lockdown.
- The quality of the local key is impacted in part by antisocial behaviour in Thurrock.
- Complaints about noise are higher than the England average (Thurrock 8 complaints per 1,000 population versus England average of 6.4 per 1,000 2019/20).
- High numbers of HGVs and high traffic flows on strategic and local roads may adversely impact on local air quality, CO2 emissions and congestion. The latest data shows that Thurrock currently remains within legal limits for key pollutants although significant growth could potentially compromise this.
- Cycling levels in Thurrock are significantly lower than for England. Levels of walking and cycling are not reaching their full potential, missing key opportunities to improve physical and mental health.

The outcome of these challenges is that:

- Antisocial behaviour such as dog fouling, littering, nuisance vehicles and drug dealing and use can impact on perceptions among the community of safety and the interest in communities to enjoy their local area.
- Worsening air quality resulting from high traffic levels will exacerbate respiratory and cardiovascular problems, whilst increasing congestion could harm job creation and economic performance.
- Missing opportunities to improve levels of walking and cycling leads to loss of key opportunities for levelling the playing field by increasing access for those who do not own a car, developing economic growth and reducing road traffic congestion.



Goal 5D. Regeneration and future developments will seek to improve physical and mental health



How we will achieve this Goal

This will be achieved through embedding health and wellbeing considerations including levelling the playing field, in Local Plan policies, alongside ensuring Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) for major new developments consider the full range of health and well being considerations. These include:

- Active Travel and Public Transport – improving accessibility and equity of access through walking and cycling infrastructure alongside an accessible and sustainable public transport system to reduce car dependency and minimise traffic growth.
- Green and open space, parks and gardens – supporting the creation of healthier, safer and greener places by developers when working on new schemes as well as prioritising park maintenance and improvements in existing spaces especially in areas with poor health outcomes.
- Air Quality and Climate Change – developing and implementing the council Climate Change Strategy and the borough high level Energy and Climate Strategy, including consideration of extreme weather resilience.
- Anti-social behaviour – utilising responsive multi-agency approaches for all residents and tenants experiencing anti-social behaviour to ensure estates and communal areas remain safe. In addition ensure the design of new neighbourhoods focus on opportunities to enhance community resilience and social capital.

What will we do differently under this strategy?

- Local Plan policies and Health Impact Assessments for major new developments will consider a full range of health and wellbeing issues.
- We will incorporate crime reduction approaches such as ‘Designing Out Crime;’ and ‘Secure by Design’ within the council’s housing Strategy and the Local Plan to reduce anti-social behaviour and enhance community resilience.
- Implement the council Climate Change Strategy and the borough high level Energy and Climate Strategy.



Domain 5, Housing and the Environment

Key deliverables, commitments and milestones

Year One (July 2022 - June 2023)

Goal 5A - We want to reduce homelessness and increase the supply of affordable housing in Thurrock

- Deliver the Homelessness Prevention and Rough sleeping strategy.
- Ensure timely interventions are in place to reduce and address homelessness
- Ensure all households owed a duty of care under the Homelessness Reduction Act receive support.
- Ensure new residential developments offer a minimum provision of 35% affordable residential units.

Goal 5B – Facilitate and encourage maintenance of good quality homes in Thurrock to support the health of residents, protecting them from hazards such as cold, damp and mould.

- Deliver the Housing Asset Management Strategy
- Deliver the Thurrock Housing Strategy
- Improve the condition of housing in the public and private sector through access to programmes such as Well Homes ensuring that high priority groups are targeted
- Address fuel poverty through enhancing access to Financial Inclusion Officers to help households in need apply for financial support and developing a coordinated corporate approach to rising cost of living challenges facing residents

Goal 5C - Improve the local response to supporting victim/survivors of abuse and exploitation to improve their health and wellbeing

- Implementation of Thurrock Council's Housing Domestic Abuse Policy
- Improve access to safe and stable housing for victims/survivors of domestic abuse and/or sexual abuse through access to a range of housing options and initiatives with access to safe housing across all tenure types

Goal 5D – Regeneration and future developments will seek to improve physical and mental health, reduce exposure to air pollution and to build community resilience and reduce antisocial behaviour

- Revise the Air Quality and Transport Strategy in line with any new legislative requirements
- Ensure that Local Plan Design Principles, Policies and Strategies incorporate opportunities to increase physical activity, promote mental well being, reduce exposure to air pollution, enhance community resilience and reduce anti-social behaviour