

## **Ashfield District Council**

### **Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024-2029**

*To be formatted*

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1. Foreword (Leader / Portfolio Holder)

*To be added*

2. Introduction

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2024-2029, and the supporting Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2024, have been produced by our Strategic Housing Team, in consultation with a range of stakeholders, and in collaboration with our Mid Nottinghamshire neighbours, Mansfield District Council and Newark & Sherwood District Council.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2024 considers the national, regional and local policy context, as well as the nature of the housing market in Ashfield across a range of indicators. It examines the data on the current and future levels of homelessness in Ashfield and sets out the resources available to address homelessness in Ashfield and Nottinghamshire. It identifies the achievements of the Ashfield Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2019-24, and highlights areas that are working well, as well as areas for improvement.

The vision and priorities set out in this Strategy seek to enhance the support we offer to those affected by homelessness and rough sleeping, whilst adapting to the rapidly evolving national policy context, and also operating within a challenging economic context and housing market.

Progress in achieving these priorities will be reviewed annually and stakeholders will be involved in the production of an annual action plan that will clearly set out how we will work together to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping in Ashfield.

### 3. Our vision and priorities

Our vision is that the people of Ashfield live in homes that are affordable, warm and within safe communities that promote their health and wellbeing.

This Strategy sets out 6 priorities that we will focus on to address homelessness in Ashfield:

1. Prevent as many residents as possible from becoming homeless, with a particular focus on those becoming homeless from a private rented sector tenancy or as a result of domestic abuse
2. End rough sleeping<sup>1</sup>
3. Help as many residents as possible to move from one home to another without the need for emergency and temporary accommodation. Where it is needed, make sure it is good quality.
4. Provide a high-quality service that customers are satisfied with, and provide opportunities for customers to influence the design and delivery of services
5. Encourage and support leaders of other organisations to do more to prevent homelessness
6. Be a trauma-informed service, by looking after the wellbeing of our customers and staff

### 4. How we will make and monitor progress on these priorities

To make and monitor progress, we will:

- Develop an action plan each year with key stakeholders
- Produce an annual review of progress
- Conduct quarterly analysis of performance data
- Monitor the local, regional and national policy context each week
- Arrange quarterly stakeholder engagement sessions
- Hold bi-monthly meetings of the Ashfield Homelessness Strategy Group

### 5. 2019-24 achievements

The review of homelessness identified the achievements of the Ashfield Homelessness

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<sup>1</sup> Defined by the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities as preventing rough sleeping or ensuring it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.

and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2019-24. Notable achievements from 2019-2024 include:

- Provided more support to all customers to maximise their income and improve their money management, with additional support for those in temporary accommodation
- 171 new affordable homes were completed in Ashfield between 2019 and 2022
- Significant external funding secured to provide support to secure and sustain a tenancy
- Homeless households have good access to social housing and loss of a social housing tenancy is a minor cause of homelessness
- External funding secured for 54 supported housing spaces
- Trialled new ways to improve access to the private rented sector
- Multi agency case conferences are well established
- Homelessness awareness sessions delivered in secondary schools
- Substantial external funding secured to support those experiencing rough sleeping
- High levels of satisfaction reported by customers

#### 6. Homelessness in Ashfield

Between April 2020 and March 2023:

- There has been a 21% increase in the number of Ashfield households being assessed for homelessness advice and assistance over the last 4 years.
- There has been an 85% increase in the number of main duty accepted decisions in the last 4 years.
- Loss of an assured shorthold tenancy is the leading cause of homelessness in Ashfield
- Domestic abuse is a significant cause of homelessness in Ashfield
- Close to half of homeless households have one or more support needs, these are typically due to mental health problems, physical health problems and experiencing domestic abuse
- The majority of requests for assistance are from single female parent households and single male households.
- The majority of lead applicants are aged 25-34, and 85% are White British
- In 2022/23, 55% of prevention cases and 26% of relief cases either stayed in existing accommodation or secured alternative accommodation
- In 2022/23, of those who secured accommodation, 49% of prevention cases, 70% of relief cases and 85% of main duty cases moved into social housing
- Use of bed and breakfast to provide emergency accommodation has increased by 96% over the last 4 years.
- In 2022/23, a third of all households seeking assistance were placed in bed and breakfast.
- Use of bed and breakfast for households with families has increased by 340% in the last 4 years.
- No households with children have stayed in B&B for more than 6 weeks and no 16 or 17 year old customers have been placed in B&B.

- The average length of stay for all households in temporary accommodation is around 3 months; for households with children, it is around 4 months.
- Ashfield's use of temporary accommodation per 1,000 households is around half the regional rate and a quarter of the national rate.
- On average in 2022/23, 10 people were found rough sleeping each month, of which 3 were new to the streets.

## 7. Review key findings

The review of homelessness also identified a number of areas that are working well, as well as areas for improvement:

### *What's working well*

We fully delivered the 2019-2024 action plan with delivery of only a handful of actions being affected by COVID-19 or no longer required due to national policy changes.

We have a well-resourced staff team that customers are highly satisfied with.

We ensure no 16 or 17 year olds are placed in B&B, and families are not placed in B&B for more than 6 weeks.

We secured significant external funding during the period of the last strategy, particularly to support those experiencing homelessness during COVID-19 and those who are rough sleeping.

The Housing Options Team has good access to social housing for our customers, but there is a reliance on it.

We have the full support of the stakeholders, customers and Members involved in our consultation activities for the proposed priorities of the 2024-29 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy.

The stakeholder consultation event highlighted a number of strengths about our homelessness service:

- It is quick and easy to access support and information from the service
- There is effective multi-agency working
- We are open to being challenged and we learn from these
- We lead the Rough Sleeping Initiative and contribute to the Making Every Adult Matter project

### *Areas for improvement*

Access to affordable housing is becoming more and more challenging.

There are rising levels of homelessness that we need to respond to.

Domestic abuse continues to be a significant cause of homelessness in Ashfield.

We must continue to improve the proportion of customers approaching at prevention stage.

We need to reverse the trend of increasing B&B use.

We have persistent levels of rough sleeping, particularly for long-term rough sleepers.

We are operating within a challenging economic environment and housing market that limits our opportunities for improvement.

Our funding position is highly uncertain, particularly for April 2025 onwards. This is both for funding awarded directly to us, as well as to others in Nottinghamshire.

Significant national policy reform is expected in multiple parts of the housing market over the next couple of years that we will need to respond to. These reforms will also have an affect, both positive and negative on the supply of and demand for affordable housing.

The stakeholder consultation event also identified areas for improvement:

- Building relationships with PRS landlords
- The suitability and availability of supported housing for single parents and people with high support needs
- Earlier identification of homelessness, including improving the Duty to Refer process
- Promoting the services available more widely
- Staff retention and preventing burnout
- Access to social care support
- Support for struggling homeowners
- Supporting PRS tenants served notice to remain in the property with an unhappy landlord

## 8. The Ashfield housing market

The Ashfield housing market can be summarised as follows:

- in Ashfield there are two growing tenure types (outright ownership and private renting) and two shrinking tenures (ownership with a mortgage and social renting).
- The supported housing sector accounts for less than 1% of the housing market
- At any one time, around 1% of all dwellings in Ashfield have been empty for 6 months or more
- There are around 150 HMOs in Ashfield
- The median house price affordability ratio worsening, with house prices around 6 times the average Ashfield income
- Median rental price affordability is more than 3 times the average Ashfield income
- It would take around 7.5 years for someone in Ashfield to save a 20% deposit
- The gap between private rents and LHA rates ranges from £51pcm to £892pcm
- 15% of Ashfield residents are income deprived – Ashfield is ranked 73<sup>rd</sup> most income-deprived area in England and 18 neighbourhoods are in the 20% most income-deprived areas in England.

- Between 2018-2023, 242 new affordable homes have been developed on large sites, this is 23% of all homes delivered. Each year 237 new affordable homes are required.
- Around 5-7% of homes owned by the Council are relet each year
- Demand for homes owned by the Council has increased by 76%
- Nationally the turnover of PRS properties has reduced by 38% and demand has increase by 46%

## 9. How this strategy was developed

This Strategy was developed by members of our Strategic Housing Team, alongside colleagues at Mansfield District Council and Newark & Sherwood District Council as part of our continued commitment to joined-up working across Mid-Nottinghamshire to tackle homelessness.

It is based on a review of:

- Our progress delivering the 2019-24 Strategy aims and objectives
- The current and emerging national, regional and local policy context
- An assessment of the Ashfield housing market
- Research into the root causes of homelessness
- A review of the financial, staffing and IT resources available
- Analysis of official homelessness statistics, local rough sleeping data, customer satisfaction surveys and customer complaints

The findings of this review are detailed separately in our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Review 2024.

We consulted with a range of stakeholders throughout the development of this Strategy:

- We asked internal teams and external stakeholders to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our work to tackle homelessness, and to tell us what we should consider doing differently.
- We later invited internal teams and external stakeholders to discuss proposed priorities and identify actions they'd like to see us and our partners take to deliver them.
- The Outward Focus Select Committee discussed and approved the proposed priorities
- Public consultation on the proposed priorities took place via a month-long online survey
- Supported housing residents were invited to a focus group to discuss their experience of homelessness and the proposed priorities