

# Your views on our proposal to review our Housing Related Support Services

Overview

Norfolk County Council is facing difficult decisions as the pressures on local government budgets continue to grow. The council will need to put more money into its budget to protect vulnerable people despite ‘substantial uncertainty’ about local government funding.

‘Even though our overall spending is expected to increase next year, forecast increases in funding are not sufficient to keep pace with projected increases in demand, particularly in adult social care and children's services.’

The council faces 'a significant challenge’ in developing Norfolk’s 2025-26 spending plan that seeks to address a budget gap of £44.722 million.

Each year, the council reviews its budget and proposes the savings it will need to make for the following year to balance its budget.

In this consultation we are asking for your views on our proposal to review funding for housing related support services.

Norfolk County Council is one of a number of organisations which fund services to help people in their own homes or other accommodation and provide advice and guidance on support available. We work in partnership with district, borough and city councils (7 authorities) across Norfolk and other partners who deliver these services. Norfolk’s 7 district, borough and city authorities have duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for homeless people who are eligible.

Norfolk County Council has a statutory duty to provide adult social care and children’s services. This means the county council helps adults to live healthy independent lives, sustain good quality care and work alongside health and schools to support more than 29,000 children with special educational needs and disabilities.

We do not have a statutory duty to support homeless services and in the 2024 Budget, the Chancellor has promised additional funding to district councils to support homelessness.

Funding which has been available from the local government for the county council to spend on Housing Related Support is no longer available. While we have been able to support services to help prevent and relieve homelessness delivered by district, borough and city councils in addition to our own statutory duties until now, due to financial constraints this is no longer possible.

We currently spend over £4.7 million a year on homelessness prevention and crisis accommodation for those who are homeless.

We propose to make savings in the amount we spend on these services. If our proposals went ahead, we would still be spending £2.7m a year on housing related support.

We will be working with our partners and others to decide together how we best use the resources we all invest to make the most impact.

We are consulting on the proposal to reduce spend on housing related support services by £2m. We want to hear your views on our proposals to help our elected councillors make the right, even if tough decisions, in agreeing a robust and sustainable budget for the year ahead.

Why we are consulting

We are looking at all of our services to see how we can do the best we can for people with the limited money that we have to spend.

We are proposing to reduce the money we spend on housing related support services. At the same time, we are working with our district, borough and city partners to develop proposals to mitigate the impact of the reduction and improving how we work together to deliver this service. The Autumn Budget 2024 commits to additional funding for homelessness to help prevent rises in the number of families in temporary accommodation and help prevent rough sleeping. The district authorities should benefit from the additional funding set out in the budget on 30 October 2024.

We know that we can’t solve society’s problems on our own, so we want to work with others to make the biggest impact with the money that we have.

Through the consultation we are engaging with people who use our services, key stakeholders, providers and partner organisations to help work out how best to support people who are not eligible for the council’s statutory care services.

We want to find out what people think about our proposal to reduce our spend on housing related support services from £4.7m to £2.7m a year. This is so the money can be spent on the services that we have to provide by law i.e. our statutory services.

We are consulting through:

- the online consultation, which is also available as a paper copy and in different formats

- email/letter to key stakeholders and partners

- email to members of the Norfolk Residents’ Panel

- one to one telephone calls with officers to discuss this proposal and feedback to us

The consultation runs from **Friday 1 November 2024 and closes on Monday 16 December 2024.**

Please note that if we receive any consultation responses after this date, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to take them into account.

We will feed back the findings from our consultation to our county councillors as part of the evidence they will use to help them come to a decision about our budget proposals.

If you need a copy of this consultation document in a different format please email haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk, call 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

The consultation questions should take about 15 minutes to complete.

The questions start on page 18 of this document.

Personal information, confidentiality and data protection

We will use any personal information to understand how different groups of people feel about our proposal.

We will process any personal information we receive from you in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679), the Data Protection Act 2018 and Norfolk County Council’s data protection policy and guidelines. This means that the council will hold your personal data and only use it for the purpose for which it was collected, being this consultation. [You can find a copy of our privacy statement on the Norfolk County Council website.[[1]](#footnote-2)](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/privacy)

We won't identify individuals when reporting back our findings and under our record management policy we will keep this information for five years. We will also, under normal circumstances, not pass your personal data on to anyone else.

However, we may be asked under access to information laws to publish or disclose some, or all, of the information you provide in response to this consultation. We will only do this where such disclosure will comply with such relevant information laws which include the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK GDPR and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

You can choose not to take part in the consultation, to stop responding at any time, or to ignore any personal questions that you do not want to answer.

Introduction

The county council faces a significant challenge in developing the budget for 2025-26. There remains a budget gap of £44.722million, there are spending pressures across wider public finances and substantial uncertainty about local government funding for 2025-26 onwards.

Norfolk County Council is committed to making Norfolk a county where businesses, organisations and communities continue to thrive together. [Our Better Together, For Norfolk strategy](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/policies-and-strategies/corporate/council-vision-and-strategy)[[2]](#footnote-3) sets out our ambitions to be one of the highest performing counties in the country, overseeing economic growth, creating jobs and opportunities for the people of Norfolk, while maintaining and cherishing our environment, countryside and heritage.

However, the county council’s 2025-26 strategic and financial planning has been undertaken in the context of continued uncertainty around the wider economic picture, as well as ongoing inflationary pressures and the consequent impact on both the cost of services we deliver, and the demand for services as households and communities continue to struggle with the rising cost of living.

It is in these difficult times that the county council cannot afford any complacency and, working with its partners, will have to consider how best to deploy its own limited resources to support the most vulnerable people and communities, whilst continuing to provide wider public services.

Although the council’s budget increases each year with Council Tax, it is not enough to meet growing needs and costs.

The October 2024 Cabinet meeting considered 2025-26 savings proposals totalling £33.552million. The 2024 Cabinet meeting minutes are available on [the Norfolk County Council website](https://norfolkcc.cmis.uk.com/norfolkcc/CalendarofMeetings/tabid/128/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/496/Meeting/2157/Committee/169/Default.aspx)[[3]](#footnote-4). They make a significant contribution towards our target of £45 million and will help the council to continue to deliver the key services for Norfolk’s residents, while balancing the books.

Our current / approach service

Norfolk County Council helps to fund housing related support services across the county – the services include advice and guidance as well as accommodation-based support.

**To help deliver these services we work in partnership with local housing authorities** (in Norfolk the local housing authorities are the district, borough and city **councils). Norfolk has six district/borough councils and one city council who have duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for people who are eligible.** You can read the government’s guidelines which are available here: [Homelessness code of guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/overview-of-the-homelessness-legislation).[[4]](#footnote-5)

Local housing authorities have a duty to provide advice and information about homelessness, the prevention of homelessness, the rights of homeless people or those at risk of homelessness, as well as information on the help that is available from the housing authority or others, and how to access that help. Norfolk County Council has a duty to deliver adult social services and children’s services. These services help residents live healthy independent lives, sustain good quality care and help care for families and children with special educational needs and disabilities.

When we talk about Housing Related Support in this proposal there are four streams to the work we deliver with district, borough and city councils:

1. **Accommodation based support services**

We fund 467 bed spaces for people who are homeless aged between 18-65. 177 bed spaces are also available for people who are homeless aged 16-24 who are judged at high risk and therefore placed in accommodation with their peers.

In 2023-24, 838 people were accommodated in Norfolk County Council funded homelessness services and 309 young people (16-25) in young people hostels.

Accommodation based services are commissioned by Norfolk County Council and provided by a number of organisations across Norfolk and comprise direct access homelessness hostels and temporary supported living for those who are homeless. We do not fund rent for individuals (this is covered by Housing Benefit) but we do fund support for people while they are in the accommodation. Examples of some of the support provided as part of accommodation services includes financial and benefits advice, managing budgets, learning basic life skills such as cooking and cleaning, emotional support and finding employment and personal safety.

We currently spend £4.1 million supporting these services.

1. **Winter Emergency Payment**

Norfolk County Council also funds a small contribution each year towards the cost of temporary accommodation in the event of exceptionally cold weather. This winter emergency payment helps to support district, borough and city councils to fund emergency accommodation. Payment is activated when the Met Office forecasts expected temperatures of zero degrees C or below and is a temporary response, the primary aim of which is to preserve life. As an emergency humanitarian response, all rough sleepers, regardless of eligibility, are offered emergency accommodation while the temperature remains at or below that level.

We currently spend £17,052 on this service.

1. **Homelessness Prevention Services**

The county council helps to fund a homelessness prevention service across 6 districts (not the City Council) which provides advice and support to those who are, or may be, threatened with homelessness. This service provides advice about access to the private rented sector, liaises with private landlords and works in partnership with district housing authorities. Between 2021-24 the service had 1702 referrals and completed personal housing plans for 1442 people.

We currently spend £437,871 on these services.

1. **Norwich City Council funding**

A financial contribution in the form of a grant is provided to help Norwich City Council. Norwich City Council commission a third party which provides a variety of services to reduce rough sleeping and homelessness and keep people off the streets.

We currently spend £119,068 on this service.

Our proposal

We are proposing to reduce and stop some spending on housing related support by £2m and work with our local authority partners to target the remaining £2.7m investment in services that continue to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We are proposing this so that our money can be spent on our statutory services.

Reducing funding for housing related support will mean a reduction in Norfolk County Council funded prevention services for homelessness, however support will still be available from the local housing authority (the district, borough and city councils) who have a statutory duty to prevent and relieve homelessness.

Local housing authorities have a duty to provide advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness and the rights of homeless people or those at risk of homelessness, as well as the help that is available from the housing authority or others and how to access that help.

As mentioned, this will impact four different streams of this work which we currently support:

1. **Accommodation based services:** We are proposing to reduce the amount spent on support in accommodation-based services. This may lead to a reduction in the number of beds available, and the type of support people receive when they are staying in this accommodation. We are working with the district, borough and city councils to minimise the reduction in service. We expect to save £1.42m.
2. **Winter Emergency Payment:** We are proposing that this small payment would be removed. As this payment is in addition to funding provided by district, borough and city councils, this service is likely to continue but capacity may be impacted. We expect to save £17,052.
3. **Prevention Services:** We are proposing to remove the funding we provide for prevention services.This funding is in addition to funding by district, borough and city councils and charities so while prevention services in the county may be impacted, it is difficult to specify how these services might change. We expect to save £437,871.
4. **Norwich City Council funding:** We are proposing to remove this payment to Norwich City Council. The service it supports receives wider funding and should continue. We expect to save £119,068.

We are working with local authority partners and providers to understand how services can be reshaped to operate with a reduced budget. In doing so, we are helping to maintain financial resource for adult social services and children’s services.

What this means for people who currently use these services

As our proposal to review services includes reducing the amount of money we spend on them, this means that some services could change.

If this proposal to reduce funding for the provision of homelessness services was to go ahead less support will be available to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and that support may be delivered differently. For example, support may be provided by a visiting support worker rather than staff who are based at the hostel / accommodation.

Reducing funding will reduce the support available to people when they are homeless, the capacity of temporary accommodation, and the support offered when people are at risk of becoming homeless. This may mean that more people become homeless or go into crisis and require other services, such as adult social care, children's services, housing and health services.

Removing or reducing the payment in the event of exceptionally cold weather which is made to the local authorities, means that there may be less support for people sleeping rough during cold weather, with potential severe health consequences.

As well as impacting on people who use services, reducing our spend on these services could impact on the organisations who provide them and the staff working for them. Providers may decide not to, or be unable to, continue providing services without our funding and decide not to continue to provide services.

If this proposal goes ahead we will work with providers to understand how best to support people to make the change.  Some people who currently receive a service might not get a service in the future.

Our housing related support services questions

Based on everything you have read in this consultation document, please answer the following questions to share your thoughts:

1. **How far would you agree or disagree with our proposal to reduce funding on housing related support?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

[ ]  Strongly agree

[ ]  Agree

[ ]  Neither agree or disagree

[ ]  Disagree

[ ]  Strongly disagree

[ ]  Don’t know

Q2. **Please tell us more about why you chose that answer and what impact you think the proposals would have, using the box below:**

Please write your comments here:

Q3. **Part 1 of the proposal relates to reducing the amount of money spent on funding accommodation-based services for people experiencing homelessness. What comments would you like to make on this?**

Please write your comments here:

Q4. **Parts 2, 3 and 4 of the proposal relate to removing payments to support preventative services for each district, a grant made to Norwich City Council, and the Winter Emergency Payment. What comments would you like to make on this?**

Please write your comments here:

About you

To make sure we are learning from a wide range of people – we’d like to ask some questions about you.  These are optional questions (so you may choose not to give this information), but this information is helpful to understand who is responding to our consultations.

**Related information**

On 12 September 2024 the ONS (Office for National Statistics) announced the findings of a review of gender identity estimates from Census 2021, which includes a reclassification of ‘official statistics in development’.

You can read more about this on the [ONS website](https://www.ons.gov.uk/news/news/betterunderstandingthestrengthsandlimitationsofgenderidentitystatistics)[[5]](#footnote-6)

We are using the ONS Census 2021 format for the 'About You' questions, but with an awareness of this update from the ONS.

Q1: **Are you responding as...?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

[ ]  An individual / member of the public

[ ]  On behalf of a voluntary or community group

[ ]  On behalf of a statutory organisation

[ ]  On behalf of a business

[ ]  A Norfolk County Councillor

[ ]  A district or borough Councillor

[ ]  A town or parish Councillor

[ ]  A Norfolk County Council employee

If you are responding on behalf of another organisation, what is the name of the organisation, group, or business?

Please write your answer here:

Q2. **How did you hear about this consultation?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

[ ]  Local media (e.g., newspaper, radio)

[ ]  From a social media post (e.g., Facebook)

[ ]  From a friend

[ ]  From a group I belong to

[ ]  From my place of work or education

[ ]  The Norfolk Residents' Panel

[ ]  District council web page

[ ]  Norfolk County Council web page

[ ]  My Parish Council

[ ]  From an email I received

[ ]  Other

Other, please write here:

Please write your answer here:

Q3. **How old are you?** Please choose **one** answer only from

the list below*:*

[ ]  Under 18

[ ]  18-24

[ ]  25-34

[ ]  35-44

[ ]  45-54

[ ]  55-64

[ ]  65-74

[ ]  75-84

[ ]  85 or older

[ ]  Prefer not to say

Q4**. What is your sex?** Please choose **one** answer only from

 the list below:

[ ]  Male

[ ]  Female

Q5. **Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex**

**registered at birth?** Please choose **one** answer only

from the list below:

[ ]  Yes

[ ]  No

If No, please write your gender identity here:

Q6. **Do you have any long-term illness, disability or health problem that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

[ ]  Yes

[ ]  No

[ ]  Prefer not to say

Q7. **If yes, which of the following best describes your condition or disability?** Please select as many answers that apply:

[ ]  Blind or partially sighted

[ ]  Deaf or hard of hearing

[ ]  Limiting health condition e.g. heart disease, asthma, strokes, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia and myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) etc.

[ ]  Learning Disabilities

[ ]  Neurodiversity e.g. autistic spectrum disorders,
dyslexia, dyspraxia

[ ]  Mental health conditions e.g. depression, schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorders, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder

[ ]  Physical disability e.g. limb disorder, amputee, wheelchair user, cerebral palsy, motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy

[ ]  Other, please write here:

Please write your answer here:

Q8. **How would you describe your ethnic background?**  Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

**Asian or Asian British**

[ ]  Asian British

[ ]  Indian

[ ]  Pakistani

[ ]  Bangladeshi

[ ]  Chinese

Any other Asian background, please describe here:

**Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African**

[ ]  Black British

[ ]  Caribbean

[ ]  African

Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background, please describe here:

**Mixed or multiple ethnic groups**

[ ]  White and Black Caribbean

[ ]  White and Black African

[ ]  White and Asian

Any other mixed or multiple group, please describe here:

**White**

[ ]  English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British Irish

[ ]  Gypsy or Irish Traveller

[ ]  Roma

Other White background, please describe here:

**Another ethnic group**

[ ]  Arab

Any other ethnic group please describe here:

[ ]  Prefer not to say

Q9. **Do you have caring responsibilities?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below*:*

  [ ]  No

  [ ]  Yes – for children with additional needs

  [ ]  Yes – for older family members

  [ ]  Yes – other

Yes - other, please write your answer here:

Q10. **Which District / Borough / City do you live in?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

  [ ]  Breckland

  [ ]  Broadland

  [ ]  Great Yarmouth

  [ ]  Kings Lynn and West Norfolk

  [ ]  North Norfolk

  [ ]  Norwich

  [ ]  South Norfolk

Q11. **Which of the following best describes you?** Please choose **one** answer only from the list below:

[ ]  Employed (full time)

[ ]  Employed (part time)

[ ]  Self-employed

[ ]  Unemployed

[ ]  Student

[ ]  Looking after the family home

[ ]  Long term sick

[ ]  Retired

Q12. **What is your first language?**

[ ]  English

Other, please write here:

How we will make our decision and report back to you

We will take a report about the findings of this consultation to the Norfolk County Council Cabinet meeting in January 2025.

The council’s scrutiny committee and select committees will comment on the budget proposals, before Cabinet finalises the proposals in January 2025 and the Full Council makes a final decision on the budget in February 2025.

Our county councillors will consider the consultation responses we receive very carefully. In particular, they will take into account:

* The impact of any proposal on individuals, groups or communities and in particular on people identified as having 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.  As well as this equality impact assessment, councillors will consider the impact of proposals on rural areas
* The views of people and stakeholders consulted
* The evidence of need and what is proven to work effectively and well
* The financial and legal positions and any constraints at the time
* Any potential alternative options, models or ideas for making the savings.

**Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this and respond.**

**You can fill in our online feedback form at:** [www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/savingsproposals)

**You can email return your feedback form to:** haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk

You can send back a paper feedback form to:

HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT CONSULTATION 2024/25

Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - South Wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH.

However, if you want to help the council save money, please use a stamp and send to this address: Stakeholder and Consultation Team, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NR1 2DH.

You may wish to keep a copy of your response to our consultation for your own records.

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|  | If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please email us at haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk or contact Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help. |

1. https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/privacy [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/policies-and-strategies/corporate/council-vision-and-strategy [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [CMIS > Calendar of Meetings](https://norfolkcc.cmis.uk.com/norfolkcc/CalendarofMeetings/tabid/128/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/496/Meeting/2157/Committee/169/Default.aspx) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Overview of the homelessness legislation - Guidance - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/overview-of-the-homelessness-legislation) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [Better understanding the strengths and limitations of gender identity statistics - Office for National Statistics](https://www.ons.gov.uk/news/news/betterunderstandingthestrengthsandlimitationsofgenderidentitystatistics) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)