

**East of England LGA Position Paper**

**The growing impact of the national housing crisis on children in the East of England**

**1. Background**

1.1 The East of England LGA (EELGA) is a cross-party politically led membership body of all the 50 local councils in the East of England. This position paper from the East of England LGA calls on Government for a new policy focus on giving children the best start in life by increasing access to a stable and decent home.

**2. Key issues**

2.1 Temporary accommodation: Government figures show that between July and September 2023, there were 109,000 households in temporary accommodation (TA) in England, including 142,490 children.<sup>1</sup> This is a record high. In the East of England, the amount spent on TA has risen from £15.4m in 2011 to £64.4m in 2023; quadrupling in 12 years.<sup>2</sup> Research shows that children who spend significant amounts of time in TA experience long term health issues later in life.

2.2 Private rented sector: Government figures show that 1.4 million families, 31% of households, in the private rented sector include dependent children. There is a growing number of families living in insecure, unaffordable and poor-quality homes in the private rented sector, all of which are increasing children’s risk of ill health.<sup>3</sup>

**3. The health impacts of housing problems on children**

3.1 Problems due to a child’s housing environment are impacting their health, as well as having a negative impact on their quality of life and increasing their need for services such as healthcare<sup>4</sup>. Below are key examples.

Housing problem	Increased health risk for children
Damp and mould, and energy poverty.	Respiratory conditions
An insecure and unaffordable home, and risk of homelessness.	Anxiety and stress in the family.
Overcrowding.	Infectious diseases, impact on child development, and sometimes safeguarding concerns.
Unsafe and inaccessible housing.	Falls and accidents.
Homeless households being placed in TA outside their communities and unsuitable accommodation.	Social isolation and impacts on child development, sometimes with limited access to services and support. Frequent house moves are hugely disruptive to a child’s learning
Access to a garden and green spaces	Poor mental health and limited physical activity.

<sup>1</sup> [Rough sleeping soars by 27% while number of homeless children in temporary accommodation hits another record high - Shelter England](#), 29 February 2024

<sup>2</sup> [East-of-England-LUDP-Housing-Priorities.pdf \(eastofenglandappg.org.uk\)](#), March 2024

<sup>3</sup> [Discrimination against families in private renting | Shelter](#), 8 January 2024

<sup>4</sup> [Demos](#), December 2023

#### **4. The role of local government**

4.1 Local councils have responsibility for many of the wider determinants of health including access to secure and decent housing. Across the East of England, local councils are working with housing providers, landlords, voluntary and health organisations, joining up efforts to mitigate the health impacts of poor-quality homes for example:

- [The impact of housing quality on children \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)
- [About Us - Safe Suffolk Renters](#)
- [Interact | Interact | Norwich City Council](#)

#### **5. Our asks of Government**

5.1 In order for Government to deliver inclusive and sustainable growth, and reduce health inequalities, the local government sector in the East of England calls on Government to:

- Take cross government action to improve access to a stable and decent home for children.
- Review the impact of housing benefit cuts on children and families.
- Improve the financial feasibility of home adaptations for families with disabled children.
- Invest in fuel poverty alleviation through the Warm Homes Plan.
- Review and prioritise the passing of the Renters Reform Bill that abolishes no-fault evictions and improves the Decent Homes Standard, and enforces it in the private rented sector.
- Review the funding landscape for increasing the supply of new homes and prioritise building more social homes.
- Give local councils multiyear funding settlements and increase the public health grant. Settlements to local government should be announced in a timely and constructive manner to enable local government to plan and make effective budget decisions.
- Support a prevention led approach that focusses on the wider determinants of health through Integrated Care systems, with greater flexibility on how money can be spent to meet local needs.
- Free up the publicly owned estate and arrange meetings between Government departments and local councils to identify unused or underused land for affordable homes. This could be for the siting of modular homes for 10 years or so, or permanent disposal.

#### **6. Further information**

6.1 This position paper has been informed by an EELGA roundtable discussion held 16 May 2024 on 'How housing affect's children health and life chances'.<sup>5</sup> This roundtable forms part of our research for a report on improving homes for healthier lives in the region. EELGA is urging Government to take specific actions on housing in the [Short Term](#) and [Medium to Long Term](#).

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<sup>5</sup> [EELGA Roundtable Discussion: How Housing Affects Children's Health and Life Chances - EELGA](#), 16 May 2024