

Energy Efficient Homes

There is activity in grant-aiding, giving low-cost loans, advice, and promoting awareness about energy efficiency. Efforts are directed to those in or at risk of fuel poverty, which is defined as spending more than 10% of household income on heating bills. Promotion is done via the council websites, attending public events, visits to schools, articles in local magazines and newspapers, and combined work with the Energy Saving Trust. A joint team exists between Broadland and South Norfolk for energy efficiency. In Norwich, the City Council works to promote energy efficiency across its social housing stock of approximately 16,000 homes, and in the private sector. Many different initiatives have begun to reduce carbon emissions and to save people money on their household bills. For qualifying households, loans are available to help pay for the installation of solar hot water systems. Together with the Government funded scheme Warm Front, the councils help people to apply for home insulation and heating packages worth up to £6,000. In addition, a variety of exemplar developments have also shown how low carbon technology can be integrated in to both new build and existing properties.

Property Adaptations

In conjunction with occupational therapist assessment and means-testing, councils offer assistance in doing adaptations that range from fitting basic grab rails, to major alterations to create level access bathing facilities. Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs), which are also known as Care & Repair Agencies, give support to vulnerable people so they can continue to live independently in their existing home. In Norwich, the City Council runs a Care & Repair agency with Orbit Housing Association; across Broadland and South Norfolk there is a joint service. The Care & Repair officer helps by assessing the repairs required, obtaining quotes, dealing with builders, and doing checks when the works are completed. The service enables people to make choices about whether to remain in their existing home, possibly avoiding the necessity to move to other accommodation such as residential care or a long-stay hospice.

Choice and Equal Opportunity

The principles of choice, equality, and fair access to housing services are integral to building cohesive and sustainable communities. Work entails raising awareness within all community groups to ensure that advice and assistance on housing matters is available. Ongoing careful monitoring will be done to guard against unfair bias in how social housing is let. The GNHP continues to seek to respond to the housing and housing-related support needs of all minority groups. A priority is new sites for Gypsies and Travellers. A shortage exists of residential pitches, transit sites, and plots for Travelling Showpeople. Targets are set for new sites by the East of England Regional Assembly up until 2011, with a compound annual increase thereafter.

Governance and Accountability

The GNHP is structured with a series of groups that lead on specific topics and then reports to senior officers and elected representatives; a structure chart is included as appendix A. These governance arrangements have proven to be successful and are not expected to change significantly in the immediate future. The structure has benefit in providing a formal mechanism for agreeing new initiatives together, whilst being flexible so organisations retain their decision-making autonomy. The prospect of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Norfolk, or significant changes in how services are organised, has had minimal effect. All organisations involved in the GNHP recognise that efforts should remain focused on frontline service delivery.

Working Together

People's health, the environment, and community safety are issues related to housing. Finding new ways to work with other organisations, both within and outside the housing profession, is important. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) is conducted by the Audit Commission on behalf of Government to check the quality of services provided by local authorities. A key theme of CAA is how councils work together in meeting the needs of people they serve. The Norfolk Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a document that explains how priorities are set and services are linked together. "Improving housing" is one of the six main outcomes in the Norfolk LAA. The GNHP has a prominent role in Norfolk LAA targets for house-building, reducing homelessness, improving household energy efficiency, and adapting homes to help people to live independently. For other Norfolk LAA outcomes, the GNHP is one of several contributors, for example in creating stronger communities.

Delivery and Monitoring

The original Greater Norwich Housing Strategy 2008-2011 was accompanied by a Sub-regional Action Plan. Each of the three councils put in place administrative systems to report progress to elected members and district Local Strategic Partnerships. These arrangements have worked and the intention is to continue in the same way. The revised Sub-regional Action Plan will be monitored by groups within the GNHP, and given attention at the district level.



Greater Norwich Housing Partnership Structure Chart



