

**TITLE: Vulnerable Community Strategy 2024-2029**

Committee: Operational Services Committee

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## **1.0 ISSUE**

1.1. To approve the Council's Vulnerable Community Strategy and Action Plan.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 Members are requested to:

(i) Approve the Council's Vulnerable Community Strategy and Action Plan 2024-29.

## **3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS**

3.1. The Council approved the current version of the Council's Vulnerable Community in January 2019.

## **4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSION(S)**

4.1. The Council's Vulnerable Community Strategy has been updated to set out what the Council will do to ensure that it understands, considers, responds to, and prevents issues affecting residents that are, or could, contribute towards vulnerability, and to support the growth of resilient communities.

4.2. To inform the strategy, information was sought from ECDC Service Leads, parish councils and organisations that are already engaged with and working to support vulnerable people. The Council sought information on issues being faced by local people that can contribute to somebody being vulnerable, what is being done to address these issues and what more could be done.

4.3. The strategy recognises that some people are at an increased risk of experiencing issues that may lead to them becoming vulnerable. The groups of people were identified through consultation with ECDC Service Leads and partner agencies.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS / EQUALITY IMPACT STATEMENT / CARBON IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

5.1. There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

- 5.2. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) completed. No adverse impacts of delivering the strategy and action plan have been identified. Without the implementation of the work set out within this strategy and action plan, the issues faced by communities listed in the section entitled: 'Vulnerabilities in East Cambridgeshire' may worsen. to. EIA can be found here: <https://intranet.eastcambs.gov.uk/employee-self-service/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/equality-impact-assessments>
- 5.3. Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) completed. In summary, the CIA concluded as follows: There are no positive or negative carbon impacts or arising. CIA can be found here: <https://intranet.eastcambs.gov.uk/report-template>

## **6.0 APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Vulnerable Community Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2029.



East Cambridgeshire  
District Council

# Vulnerable Community Strategy

2024 to 2029

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## Foreword

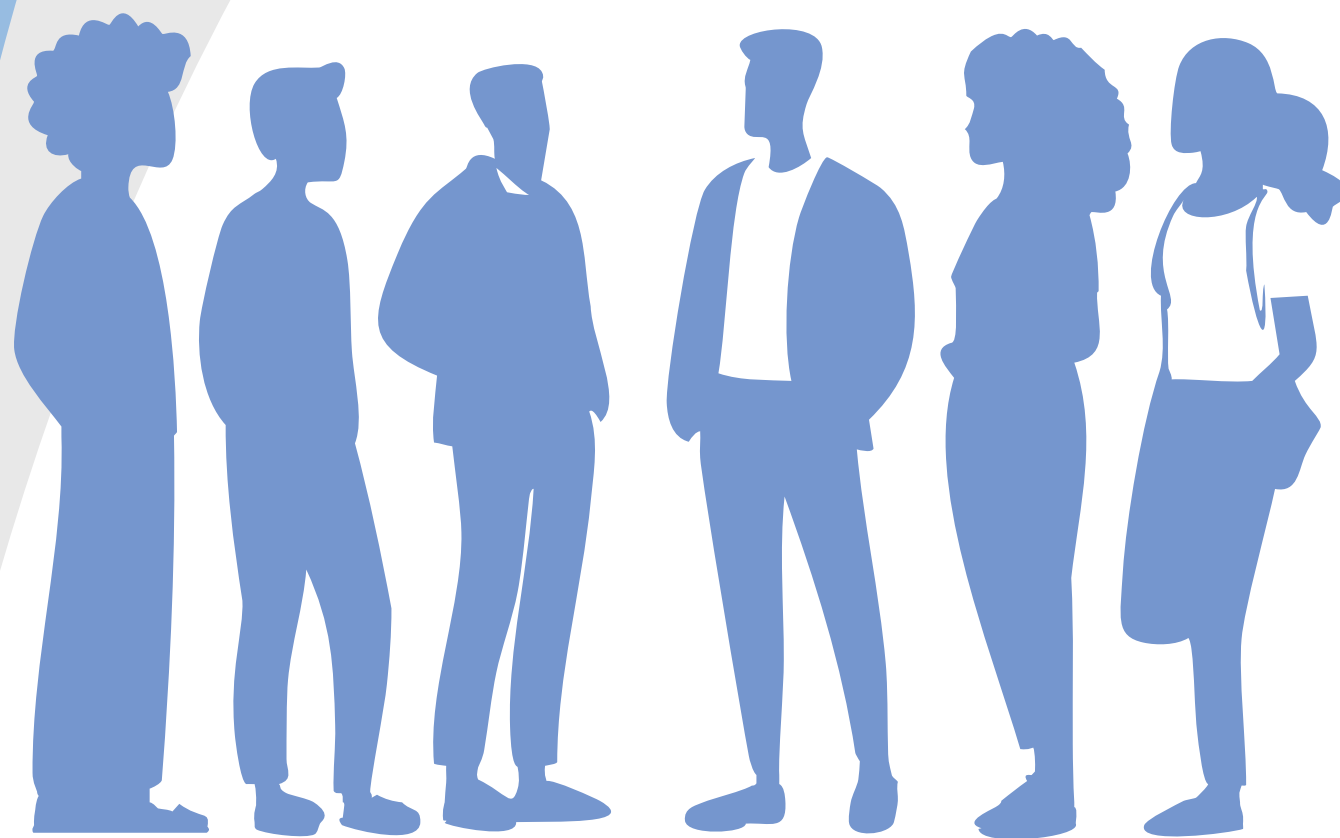
I am pleased to present East Cambridgeshire District Council's (E CDC) Vulnerable Community Strategy, which sets out the council's ambitions and commitments to the residents of East Cambridgeshire.

The council aims to ensure that it understands, considers, responds to and prevents issues affecting residents that are, or could, contribute towards vulnerability. This strategy sets out what support the council will provide for those who are vulnerable or are at-risk. This strategy has been informed using the findings of primary and secondary research, and through consultation with relevant local organisations and council services.

This strategy strives to make East Cambridgeshire a fantastic place to live for all residents and whilst the council acknowledges that it may not always be best placed to deal with specific issues, it recognises the importance of working together with partner agencies and the community to ensure that everyone has the support that they need.

Councillor Julia Huffer

Chair of Operational Services  
Committee



## Aim

The aim of this strategy is to ensure that the council understands, considers, responds to and prevents issues affecting residents that are, or could, contribute towards vulnerability, and to support the growth of resilient communities.

The objectives of the strategy are to:

- ensure that mechanisms are in place to identify issues contributing to vulnerability
- support residents and communities in the best way we can by providing flexible and adaptable services
- empower individuals and communities to become more resilient by increasing capacity through skills, knowledge, and connections
- raise awareness of the resources and support available to and within communities

# Context

**Events in recent years have highlighted vulnerabilities in communities and have shown that anyone can become vulnerable. The COVID-19 pandemic made it clear that some people are more likely to face issues which can lead to them becoming vulnerable. Much has changed since this strategy was last updated. The response to the pandemic has shown that communities know what they need, and that our role is to provide mechanisms to allow them to flourish. Therefore, now is an important time to review how the council will support communities.**

## National requirements

The council recognise and endorse the principles of the Human Rights Act 1998 in that everybody has the right to be treated equally, with fairness, dignity and respect. In 2012, the government introduced the Welfare Reform Act, which aims to make the benefits and tax credits systems fairer and simpler. Therefore, it is essential that the council has mechanisms in place to support vulnerable people.

The public sector Equality Duty (created by the Equality Act 2010) requires councils to recognise the need to encourage people to take part in public life and other activities. The Equality Act requires the council to ensure that equality and diversity are embedded into all its functions and activities. This supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies (and others providing public services) consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective, accessible to all and which meet different people's needs.

The Localism Act 2011 contains a wide range of measures to devolve more

powers to councils and neighbourhoods and give local communities greater control over local decisions like housing and planning.

The council is committed to supporting Cambridgeshire County Council's Care Together vision, which is based on developing local services that enable our population to remain independent at home for as long as possible.

The district council's Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027 outlines several ways the council will aim to reduce vulnerability. The Corporate Plan outlines strategic areas of focus and details commitments of projects to meet community need. Areas of focus include providing genuinely affordable housing, improving local transport and infrastructure, and supporting residents to live happy and healthy lives.

The UK accessibility legislation, the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018, states that public bodies must comply with the accessibility requirements for their website, Intranet, all published documents and apps.

In June 2023, the council agreed to endorse the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and agreed to seek alignment of the council's policies and priorities, as and when these are updated, with the overall ambition of the goals. This strategy contributes towards achieving the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

**Goal 1** – End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

**Goal 2** – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

**Goal 3** – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

**Goal 5** – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

**Goal 7** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

**Goal 10** – Reduce inequality in and among countries.

**Goal 11** – Make cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

The council adheres to the following legislation in relation to supporting vulnerable communities.

Domestic Abuse Act, which seeks to increase awareness of domestic abuse, strengthen support for victims and improve the effectiveness of the justice system.

Prevent, which aims to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

The Armed Forces Covenant, which is a promise by the nation, founded on the

unique obligations and sacrifices of those who serve, or have served, in the armed forces, that they and their families should be treated fairly. The further enshrinement of the covenant into law is an opportunity to build upon work councils are already leading to help serving personnel, reservists, veterans and their families to have the same equality of access to public services as their civilian neighbours.

## Local requirements

The Cambridgeshire Compact is a partnership arrangement between statutory bodies and the voluntary and community sector, which has been designed to improve relationships and provide a framework within which to understand what to expect from each other.

The council has signed up to the Community Covenant, which is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the nation, the government and the armed forces at the local level. The purpose of the Community Covenant is to encourage support for the armed forces community working and residing in Cambridgeshire and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this armed forces community. This includes in-service and ex-service personnel, their families and widows/widowers in Cambridgeshire. For the council, the Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring its knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the armed forces community.



Supporting vulnerable communities is included within many of the council's Service Delivery Plans and policies. For example:

- Communities and Partnerships' work with the East Cambs Community Safety Partnership
- Housing and Community Advice providing support to those who are homeless/at risk, domestic abuse victims and those in need of income support
- Environmental Services' commitment to ensuring residents are housed in safe dwelling

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2021 to 2024 is the council's commitment to meeting the duties placed upon it by equality legislation, including the Equality Act 2010.

This strategy will contribute towards achieving the following council's priorities as set out in the council's Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027:

- to support our residents to live happy and healthy lives
- to improve our roads and local transport
- to invest in community infrastructure

## Definition of vulnerable person

Being vulnerable is defined as in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, risk of abuse or neglect ([Vulnerabilities: applying All Our Health](#)).

There is no commonly used definition of childhood vulnerability. A child can be vulnerable to risks and poor outcomes due to individual characteristics, the impact of action or inaction by other people and their physical and social environment.

The NHS defines vulnerable adults as any adult (person over the age of 18) unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from exploitation.

## Those who are vulnerable

Events over recent years have demonstrated that anybody can go through periods of vulnerability depending on their circumstances. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis are creating challenging times for many people, with many struggling more in general.

Some people are at an increased risk of experiencing issues that may lead to them becoming vulnerable including, but not limited to:

- people with disabilities and physical or mental health issues
- those who are rurally isolated
- those who are socially isolated
- those who are digitally isolated
- people who require financial assistance or support to access essentials
- the long term unemployed and those living in poverty
- those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

- those affected by alcohol and substance misuse
- older people
- armed forces community
- migrant workers, ethnic minority groups, refugees and asylum seekers
- young people moving through the care system (aged 16 and over)
- new communities
- carers

## Local evidence and key drivers supporting the need for this strategy

The population of East Cambridgeshire is predicted to grow to 108,610 by 2036, an increase of 25.4% since 2016. Between 2016 and 2026, the over 75 year age group is expected to have most population growth across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with East Cambridgeshire expected to face the second highest level of proportional growth in any Cambridgeshire district. Our source for this information comes from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Core Dataset 2018/19 District Summary: East Cambridgeshire.

Between the last two censuses, the average (median) age of East Cambridgeshire residents increased by three years, from 40 to 43 years of age. This area had a higher average age than both England and the East of England in 2021.

In 2021, 4.8% of East Cambridgeshire residents reported providing unpaid care each week. This is a decrease from 7.4% in 2011 ([Our source for this information comes from the Office of National Statistics \(ONS\) \(opens in new window\)](#))

In 2022 and 2023, the council's Community Advice Service stated that the majority of people that they assisted came from

Ely, Soham and Littleport. The main issues faced by clients were around benefits and financial assistance.

In 2022 and 2023, Citizens Advice West Suffolk stated the majority of their East Cambridgeshire clients came from Woodditton, Burwell, Fordham and Isleham. The most common issues their clients required assistance with included benefits and debt advice and housing.

We consulted with other agencies who are already engaged with and working to support vulnerable people, in order to inform what can contribute to somebody being vulnerable, the issues being faced by local people, and what work is already taking place in East Cambridgeshire.

## Benefits of delivering this strategy

The delivery of this strategy will provide a range of benefits to both the council and the community, including:

- **providing a point of reference to inform communities of support available**
- **supporting the council to meet its statutory requirements**
- **providing a point of reference and evidence base for the council, local organisations and the community of issues faced by local people**
- **preventative measures could reduce demand for services**
- **people being better equipped to help each other resulting in more resilient, empowered communities**

# Vulnerabilities in East Cambridgeshire

This section identifies specific issues that can contribute towards somebody becoming vulnerable and evidence relating to these issues in East Cambridgeshire.

## Isolation, social exclusion, loneliness, unable to access services, digital isolation, lack of access to transport, disengagement

**5.5%** of East Cambridgeshire residents reported feeling lonely or always lonely (Office for National Statistics - Opinions and Lifestyle Survey 2022).

**6 to 13%** of the population in Cambridgeshire aged over 65 are likely to be lonely most or all of the time. For Cambridgeshire, this would constitute between 7,100 and 15,400 adults aged over 65 (data from [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Insights, opens in new window](#)).

**82%** of veterans said they are lonely (data from [the Help for Heroes Survey, opens in new window](#)).

People from Black, Asian and Minority (BAME) backgrounds are more at risk of experiencing certain factors that cause loneliness, like feelings of not belonging and discrimination. People from BAME backgrounds often also face greater barriers to accessing help to join community activities, making social connections and creating a sense of belonging (data from [Red Cross, Barriers to Belonging, opens in new window](#)).

In the Cambridgeshire County Council's Quality of Life Survey carried out in 2023, **29%** of those that responded said they often feel lonely.

School pressures and feelings of disengagement and loneliness were identified as being linked to mental health issues including depression (data from [the East Cambridgeshire Youth Strategy, opens in new window](#)).

The ability to use public transport, walk, cycle or drive to an employment centre, and participation in further education and skills for people age 19 years and over, are a priority for residents in East Cambridgeshire. (data from [the East Cambridgeshire Youth Strategy, opens in new window](#)).

In 2022 and 2023, the council's Community Advice Service supported **60%** of clients face-to-face, **20%** over the phone, **10%** over email, **5%** through home visits, **3%** on the advice vehicle and **2%** by letter.



## Poor physical and mental health, disabilities

In the Cambridgeshire County Council [2023 Quality of Life Survey](#), **40%** of East Cambridgeshire residents said they have struggled with their physical health that year.

A variety of health-related matters were identified as issues by young people, including mental health (including suicidal thoughts), lack of exercise, pressure from peers to vape, smoke, take drugs and drink (data from [Youth Strategy, opens in new window](#)).

In 2021, **5.8%** of East Cambridgeshire residents were identified as being disabled and limited a lot and **10.1%** as being disabled and limited a little, a decrease from **6.9%** and **9.5%** respectively in 2011. This was a similar decrease to across the East of England as a whole (data from [the ONS 'How Life has changed in East Cambridgeshire: Census 2021', opens in new window](#)).

In 2021, **48.8%** of East Cambridgeshire residents described their health as "very good", increasing from **47.3%** in 2011. Those describing their health as "good" fell from **35.6%** to **35.2%**. These are age-standardised proportions (data from the ONS 'How Life Has Changed in East Cambridgeshire: Census 2021').

East Cambridgeshire is statistically significantly better than England for indicators including life expectancy at birth, prevalence of mental health conditions and excess weight in children (data from the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Core Dataset 2019, opens in new window](#)).

East Cambridgeshire has statistically significantly high rates of self-harm, prevalence of high blood pressure, asthma and cancer, and a lower-than-expected

dementia diagnosis rate compared to England (data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Core Dataset 2019).

Data collected from Cambridgeshire secondary schools in 2021, indicates pupils have lower resilience and poorer wellbeing on many measures compared to previous years, and that overall life satisfaction has fallen (data from [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Insights, opens in new window](#)).

It is estimated that there are almost 34,000 children and young people aged 2 to 25 years with a diagnosable mental health disorder across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is forecast that mental disorders in 5 to 19 year olds will increase by **10%** in both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough between 2019 and 2024, followed by **5%** increase from 2024 to 2029 (data from [the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Core Dataset 2019, opens in new window](#)).

There are risks to the mental health of veterans and current service personnel as a result of exposure to violent or traumatic experiences, instability in domestic life and difficulties in making the transition from service to civilian life. This information was feedback from Cambridgeshire County Council's Armed Forces Covenant Officer.

The support provided by unpaid carers, most commonly to family members or partners, is often physically and emotionally demanding. As such, this group is at a higher risk of experiencing poor mental health (Public Health England, 2021) (data from [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Insights](#)).

**36%** of East Cambridgeshire residents have suffered with their mental health (data from [2023 Quality of Life Survey, opens in new window](#)).



In 2022 and 2023, **54%** of clients seeking advice from Citizens Advice West Suffolk identified as disabled or as having a long-term health condition.

Poverty and financial insecurity have a significant impact on material living conditions and stress, and as a result, are strong risk factors for mental illness (data from [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Insights, opens in new window](#)).

## Financial issues

Citizens Advice West Suffolk reported needing to support **6%** more clients in the first 6 months of the 2023 to 2024 financial year compared with in the previous year. The areas requiring the most support were around welfare benefits, debt and housing.

East Cambridgeshire has a lower (better) children's deprivation score than Cambridgeshire, which is below national average, but the older people's deprivation score is higher (worse) in East Cambridgeshire than Cambridgeshire as a whole. Our source for this information comes from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Core Dataset.

Compared to the England average, East Cambridgeshire has a statistically similar percentage of people in employment. The recent trend is an increase in employment, which is also found at the Cambridgeshire or England level (data from [Office of National Statistics, opens in new window](#)).

East Cambridgeshire has low levels of unemployment and high levels of economic activity, including a high level of those in employment that are self-employed. Our source for this information comes from the Cambridgeshire Insight (data from [Cambridgeshire Insight, opens in new window](#)).

Rising costs are worrying the people in our county, with **86%** saying this is a concern. (data from [the Cambridgeshire County Council, Quality of Life Survey 2023, opens in new window](#)).

There has been an increase in people claiming Universal Credit in East Cambridgeshire (data from [Cambridge and Peterborough Insights, opens in new window](#)).

The crude rate of statutory homeless people not in 'priority need' per 1,000 is relatively low in East Cambridgeshire. The rate is statistically significantly lower than the England average ([data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Core Dataset, opens in new window](#)).

In Cambridgeshire, the rate per 1,000 households of households in temporary accommodation is statistically significantly better than England (data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Core Dataset).

Homelessness is a key risk factor for the armed forces. Long-term illness, disability or infirmity remain the most common source of welfare needs among the adult ex-service community. After this, the greatest welfare needs for the ex-service community of retirement age in 2020 are forecast to be mobility problems, self-care and housing (data from [Armed Forces JNSA final report 2019, opens in new window](#)).

In 2022 and 2023, both Citizens Advice West Suffolk and the council's Community Advice Service stated that financial issues including debt/benefit advice were among the most common issues clients required assistance with.

Issues and barriers that inhibit some Gypsy and Traveller people from financial and economic inclusion, such as:

- financial institutions, such as banks and insurance brokers, restricting access to goods and services to Gypsies and Travellers living in caravans or mobile homes on sites and roadside camps
- prejudicial views limiting access to services and employment opportunities
- stark health and educational inequalities experienced by Gypsies and Travellers, which reduce employment opportunities
- Gypsies and Travellers facing difficulties when trying to access welfare benefits and some grant schemes available to the wider public
- increased digitalisation of services creating barriers for Gypsies and Travellers with low digital literacy
- with the cost of living crisis and rising energy costs, the pre-existing inequalities that Gypsies and Travellers face are made worse (data from [the Friends, Families & Travellers: Getting a fair deal for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, opens in new window](#)).

## Hate crime, anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse/ violence, manipulation

Most reported crime in East Cambridgeshire is violence and sexual offences, followed by criminal damage and arson, and public disorder (data from [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Insights, opens in new window](#)).

Hate crimes nationally are most likely to be targeting race or disability, but recently there has been a rise in hate crimes against gender and sexual orientation. (data from [the Stop Hate UK Annual Statistical Review 2022 to 2023, opens in new window](#)).

**53%** of people aged 65 plus have been targeted by scams and criminals (Action Fraud) (data from [the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Against Scams Partnership Charter 2018, opens in new window](#)).

**47%** of young people consulted advised that safety could be better, with consultees reporting fears of anti-social behaviour, knife crime, stranger danger, peer pressure to join a gang, drug taking, bullying and concerns about people online (data from [Youth Strategy, opens in new window](#)).

**44%** of British adults openly express negative attitudes against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities - more than for any other protected characteristic group (data from [the Friends, Families & Travellers: Getting a fair deal for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, opens in new window](#)).



# What the council is doing to address vulnerabilities in East Cambridgeshire

## Support residents and communities in the best way we can by providing flexible and adaptable services

To use a variety of methods to engage with communities across the district including the Community Advice bus, community hubs and parish council conferences.

Explore opportunities to carry out home visits if no phone or internet is available or collect tenants and drive them to the council offices for assessments/to make phone calls.

Provide a free drop-in service at the district offices Monday to Friday where advice is readily available, and options can be outlined.

Signpost to local voluntary organisations including voluntary car schemes.

Support and promote community transport schemes in areas where there is a lack of public transport.

Consider the needs for transport improvements, including public transport, walking, and cycling when developing large sites.

Promote and manage Assets of Community Value under the terms of the Localism Act 2011.

Offer digital assistance in the council's customer services.

Increase electoral registration by targeting under registered groups via visits to care homes, studs and agricultural worker hostels.

Encourage and assist parishes to sign up as a Dementia Friend.

The council's Housing and Community Advice officers will attend appointments to support clients where required and feasible.

Make referral to health teams and counselling services.

Carry out inspections of poorly maintained private sector rented properties, taking enforcement where necessary to protect the health and wellbeing of tenants.

Provide a mobile advice service in selected locations.

Provide telephone support 24/7 every day for those facing homelessness.

Work with other agencies and organisations to provide housing support and advice to vulnerable young people and young people identified as being at risk of homelessness or leaving care.

Offer income and expenditure assessments, money management and savings advice. Provide assistance to residents seeking housing benefits. Debt management advice is offered, intensive budgeting plans put in place to help with finances.

The council will act in an advocacy role to help obtain welfare benefits.

Provide support to landlords as well as tenants with tenancy issues such as housing benefit issues, evictions, repairs, best practice, and tenancy agreement.

Help people gain access to the food and resources required to keep healthy by:

- taking people to and signposting them to charities and food banks to collect food
- making food bank referrals
- working with and refer to children's centres that deliver cooking courses for parents and guardians
- providing money management assistance to people who need help obtaining food
- supporting other organisations who signpost people to food banks

Provide genuinely affordable housing by local people for local people by supporting the delivery Community Land Trusts to enable people to live and work locally.

Work with the county council and outreach domestic abuse teams to support those effected by domestic abuse, as stated in our Resident's Domestic Abuse Policy.

Following the Plain English advice on presenting information in a clear and understandable content and making it accessible to people regardless of their background, familiarity with the topic or disabilities (explaining technical terms and acronyms, avoiding jargon and replacing difficult words with simple alternatives, using active verbs instead of passive tense).

## Empower individuals and communities to become more resilient by increasing capacity through skills, knowledge, and connections

Participate in multi-agency partnerships and events to address community needs using a joined-up approach. Working with partners such as Cambridgeshire County Council, NHS, parish councils and community groups, to support residents facing these issues.

Deliver parish council conferences.

Promote and manage the council's Community Fund grants scheme aimed at supporting local community groups to provide new or develop existing community services and initiatives that improve the quality of life for residents living in East Cambridgeshire.

Provide support to community infrastructure and support organisations that help communities to remain well and to live independently.

Deliver physical activity programmes through Healthy You project, including group classes and wellbeing walks to encourage participation.

Support leisure facilities providing for target groups.

Promote and maintain council owned and/or managed play areas and open spaces.

Offer advice and assistance to improve energy efficiency of homes. Provide residents with advice regarding fuel bill queries.

Home Improvement Agency will carry out home visits to clients and assist with filling out application forms and other benefit applications.

Adhere to the council's following planning policies.

Encourage the provision of dwellings that meet the Lifetime Homes standard so that they are easily adaptable for the elderly and disabled.

Affordable housing should be focused on public transport routes, sports facilities, play areas and open space provision on larger developments.

Promote the Community Eyes and Ears Booklet which provides advice on spotting signs of issues in communities such as scams and fraud, domestic violence and hate crime, and how to report/get the correct support.

Increase awareness of the issues of domestic violence and the signs to look out for through the White Ribbon scheme.

Ensure domestic abuse is at the forefront of the local authorities thinking through undertaking the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation.

Support the CSP to carry out preventative engagement work on these topics with schools, community groups, youth groups and parish councils.

Support the establishment of hate crime reporting centres.

Support parish council-led community safety forums and associated action plan.

### Ensure that mechanisms are in place to identify issues contributing to vulnerability

Raise issues at multi-agency Problem Solving Group (PSG) once a month and escalate to the Delivery Group for recommendations if not solved at PSG level.

Engage with the Travelling community to help improve community relations and living conditions.

Participate in multi-agency partnerships and events to address and identify community needs using a joined-up approach.

Engagement with residents, including via the Community Safety Partnership, to understand issues negatively impacting their lives. Examples include supporting the court experience events with local school students, carrying out detached youth engagement at locations frequented by young people and supporting parish council-led community safety forums.



### Raise awareness of the resources and support available to and within communities

Signpost to the Armed Forces Hub.

Administer the Register of Consultee database to enable members of the community to get involved in local decision-making by acting as a sounding board for future policy or service proposals. It gives the community a chance to give their views about the decisions the council makes, and the services provided.

Promote and signpost to volunteering tools and platforms such as the Volunteer Cambs website.

Maintain and update information on the council's youth employment and education webpage.

Ensuring that information is made accessible and a broad range of media channels are used when providing information for residents.

Promote available support via the ECDC website, social media channels and via the Housing and Community Advice team.

### ECDC Vulnerable Persons Signposting Toolkit and Community Engagement Toolkit

#### Vulnerable Persons Signposting Toolkit

The council has a Vulnerable Persons Toolkit which provides information on services and support available in East Cambridgeshire that can be accessed by officers and members who are assisting individuals in need. The toolkit outlines the services and support provided by the council and known external organisations, addressing a variety of matters that could help prevent or respond to a person or people experiencing conditions that could cause them vulnerability. The toolkit contains contact information and useful links where further information can be found.

#### Community Engagement Toolkit

The Council's Community Engagement Toolkit provides best practice and practical information to help officers and members carry out effective community engagement. The toolkit outlines the when, who, how and where to engage and identifies a range of different methods and techniques to do so. It also highlights the required core skills from planning through to evaluating.

As part of the delivery of this Strategy, we will review and update the Vulnerable Persons Signposting Toolkit and Community Engagement Toolkit and will engage with residents, including vulnerable communities and groups that have traditionally been harder to reach to ensure that the toolkits are still fit for purpose.



# SWOT analysis

## Strengths

- Willingness from the community to help themselves, as demonstrated during the pandemic.
- Established cross-sector, multi-agency networks working together for the good of the community.
- Strong Community Safety Partnership.
- ECDC Community Engagement and Health and Wellbeing Strategies updated during 2023 and 2024.
- 67%** see family and friends as often as they would like in East Cambridgeshire (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- 64%** feel they have enough free time in East Cambridgeshire (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- Third highest mean happiness out of the Cambridgeshire districts (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- 80%** agree people from different backgrounds get on well together in East Cambridgeshire (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- 86%** feel safe in East Cambridgeshire (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- 77%** feel like they belong in East Cambridgeshires (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- 76%** know where to go to find out how to get involved, for example volunteering in East Cambridgeshire (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).

## Weaknesses

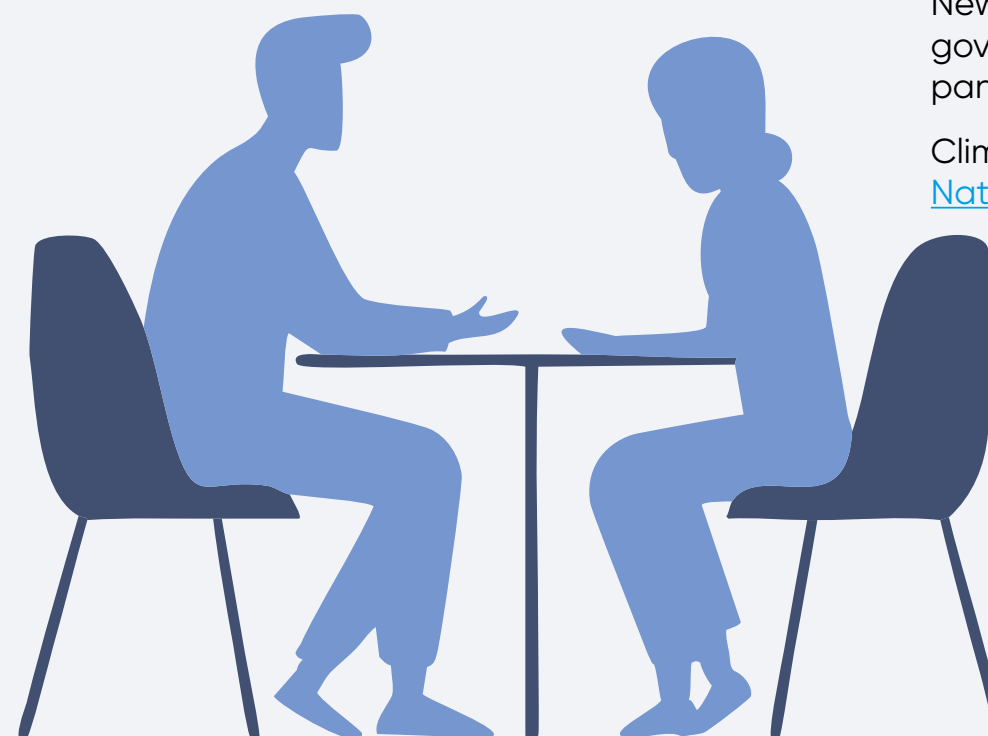
- 86%** concerned by cost of living increases in East Cambridgeshire (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- 75%** concerned by climate change in East Cambridgeshire (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- 50%** concerned by investment and jobs in East Cambridgeshire (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- Poor public transport links within the district (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- 36%** of residents have struggled with their mental health in the last year (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- 31%** of parents say their child has experienced mental health problems this year in East Cambridgeshire (data from [Quality of Life Distict Report 2023](#)).
- National and local volunteer shortages (data from [CCVS blog](#)).
- Citizens Advice West Suffolk reported a 65% increase in clients requiring energy support between January 2022 and January 2023.

## Opportunities

- Continued partnership working particularly with health services.
- Support for community transport services and volunteer centres.
- Increase in community engagement through public events and consultation.
- Development and implementation of the Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan.

## Threats

- Cost of living increases affecting overall wellbeing, mental and physical health (data from [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Insights](#)).
- [The post-COVID-19 pandemic impacts on mental and physical health](#). Our source comes from the World Health Organisation: The impact of COVID-19 on mental health cannot be made light of.
- Reduction of benefits/grants, for example, Household Support Fund/energy support not being carried forward (data from [Local Government Chronicle](#)).
- People moving from income support to Universal Credit (data from [Citizens Advice](#)).
- War/international unrest causing rises in fuel costs and food shortages (data from the [International Monetary Fund](#)).
- New COVID variant, national or local government enforced restrictions, or new pandemic.
- Climate change (data from [Office of National Statistics](#)).





## How we will measure our achievements

It is important for the council to know whether it is achieving the aims of the Vulnerable Community Strategy. A variety of methods will be used to measure this, including:

- monitoring and reporting on the performance of the strategy through the implementation of the Action Plan and through the service delivery plan reporting process
- acting on feedback from our inspections and external assessments of performance
- participating in any countywide forums that provide the opportunity to share and learn from best practice
- completion of Equality Impact Assessments for all reports relating to potential changes in service delivery to demonstrate that the needs of all user groups have been considered

## Measuring success

When communities say the following, we will know that this strategy is proving successful.



# Vulnerable Community Action Plan 2024 to 2029

It is clear from this strategy that the council is already undertaking a breadth of activity to tackle vulnerabilities in the district, however, to ensure that the council is doing all that it can to achieve the aims of this strategy, it has produced a Vulnerable Community Action Plan.

## Objective

Ensure that mechanisms are in place to identify issues contributing to vulnerability.

<b>Target</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Directly engage with members of vulnerable communities to inform the updating of the council’s Vulnerable Communities Signposting Toolkit.	Communities and Partnerships
	<b>Timescale</b>
	March 2026

<b>Target</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Deliver the council’s Community Engagement Strategy 2024 to 2028 which aims to ensure that the council is providing local people with appropriate and accessible opportunities to get involved, influence local decision making and have their say on the place they call home so that they are informed about local matters and can provide feedback to the council on what they need and their views on council services.	Communities and Partnerships
	<b>Timescale</b>
	2024 to 2029

## Objective

Support residents and communities in the best way we can by providing flexible and adaptable services.

<b>Target</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Develop, approve, and implement East Cambridgeshire District Council Armed Forces Action Plan.	Housing and Community Advice
	<b>Timescale</b>
	Approval during 2024 and 2025



<b>Target</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Manage Service Level Agreements between the council and Voluntary and Community Action East Cambs, to support the provision of a ‘one stop shop’ delivery services (including the delivery of a social car scheme and volunteer gardening scheme) through volunteers to local people; and advice and information to voluntary and community groups and volunteers; and to act as an umbrella organisation providing generic infrastructure support to voluntary and community sector organisations within East Cambridgeshire.	Communities and Partnerships
	<b>Timescale</b>
	31 March 2026

<b>Target</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Manage Service Level Agreements between the council and Citizens Advice West Suffolk, to support the provision of free, confidential, impartial, and independent advice to enable local residents to deal with a wide range of issues, including benefits, housing, money advice, employment, consumer, relationships, taxation and many more.	Communities and Partnerships
	<b>Timescale</b>
	31 March 2027

<b>Target</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Implement the council’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan.	Environmental Health, Leisure and Active Lifestyles
	<b>Timescale</b>
	April 2024 to March 2027

## Objective

Empower individuals and communities to become more resilient by increasing capacity through skills, knowledge, and connections.

### Target

Support the annual delivery of the East Cambs Community Safety Partnership's Action Plan, which includes the provision of training and awareness raising initiatives aimed at improving community safety.

### Lead

ECDC officers on the CSP Board

### Timescale

Annually

## Objective

Raise awareness of the resources and support available to and within communities.

### Target

Deliver 2 East Cambs Youth Fusion events.

### Lead

Communities and Partnerships

### Timescale

31 March 2025

### Target

Deliver 1 Health and Wellbeing event.

### Lead

Environmental Health, Leisure and Active Lifestyles

### Timescale

31 March 2025

### Target

Produce an online welcome pack for residents of new communities that includes information about the council, its services and its objectives, and ways of engaging with the council.

### Lead

Communications

### Timescale

March 2027

End of document.

