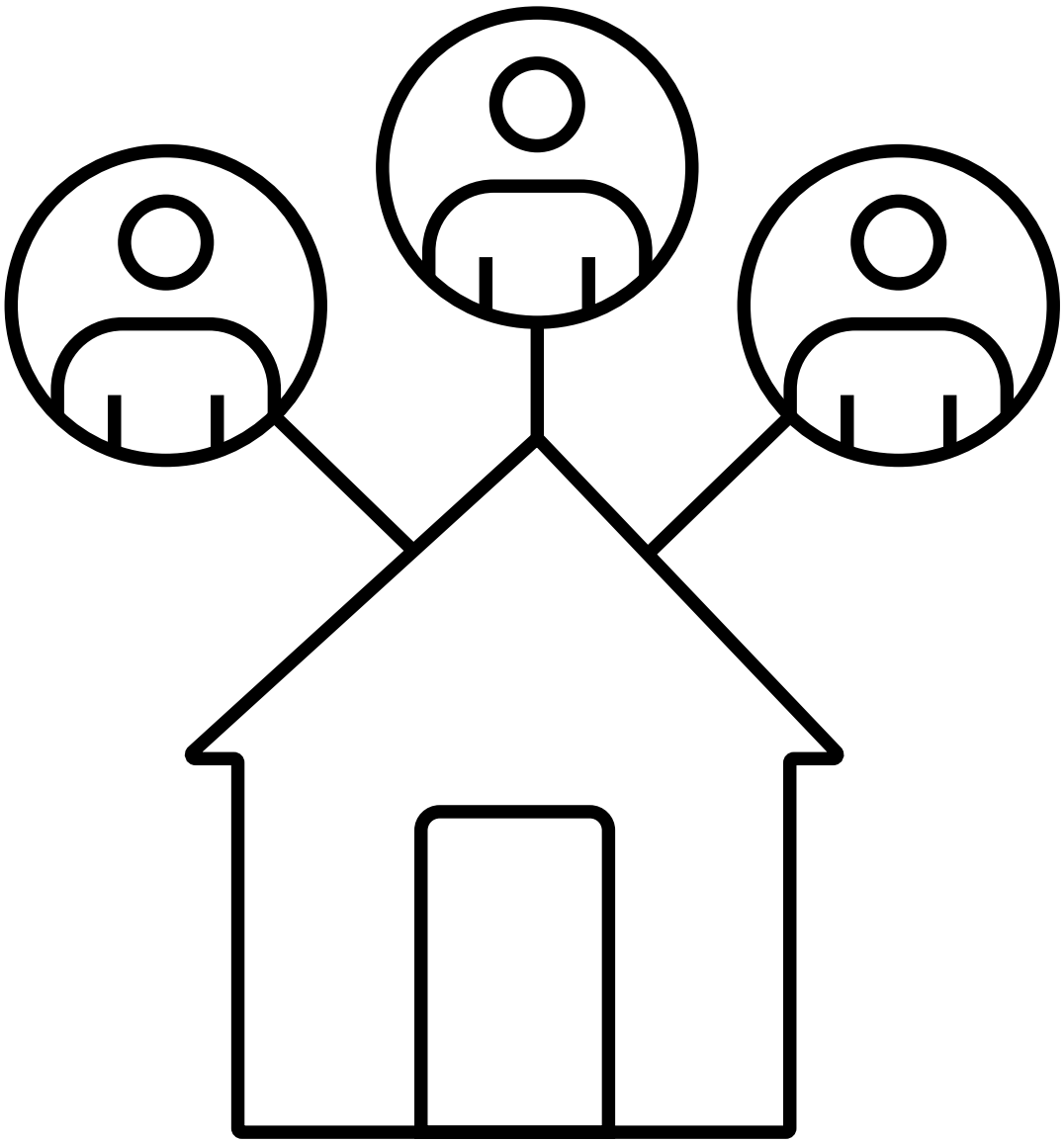


Wigan Borough Housing Strategy

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Foreword
Cllr Gambles

Here in Wigan, we understand that housing is far more than bricks and mortar. Quality, affordable and secure homes are absolutely fundamental to the health and wellbeing of our residents, and are at the heart of our thriving, sustainable communities. We believe that everyone deserves equal access to a safe place that they can call home, and are passionate about tackling inequalities to achieve a genuinely fair and prosperous local housing sector, that works for all of our residents.

We have come a long way since our last Housing Strategy and are proud of our achievements, from the delivery of new Council homes and strengthened partnerships with housing associations and developers, to innovative homelessness support and flagship Extra Care schemes. We know that significant challenges remain, such as the rise of house prices and private rents, outstripping local incomes, and the limited supply of homes to meet the increasing need for affordable and older persons accommodation. Through the hard work, passion and innovation of our housing teams, strong partnerships with stakeholders, and deep engagement with our residents, businesses and communities, we are confident that we can rise to these challenges.

Our refreshed Housing Strategy builds on and celebrates the successes of both the former strategy and The Deal 2030, taking our housing ambitions forward as we respond to new regulations governing the social, supported and private rented sectors, the latest housing needs data, and rising affordability challenges. The strategy is framed by our new movement for change, Progress with Unity, and sets out how we can achieve a strong and equitable housing sector that responds to the needs of our residents and communities. It is founded through co-production, as the voices and insights of tenants, residents, charity and community partners have helped to shape our priorities.

I am proud to present our refreshed Housing Strategy and vision for 2026 to 2031. It prioritises the growth of affordable housing, the transformation of our town centres into strong, flourishing communities, a strengthened private rental sector, and increased support and housing options for our older and more vulnerable residents. As a landlord of 21,000 properties, we are committed to delivering high-quality, tenant-focused services; the strategy sets out how we will ensure we put our tenants first, through amplifying tenant voice, improving our responsive repairs service, and investing in our homes.

Whether you live, work, or provide homes in the borough, I invite you to read this strategy, and join us in shaping a housing sector where all Wigan residents have access to a safe, secure home that enables them to flourish.



Building Homes, Creating Opportunity – Housing at the Heart of Progress

Since our last housing strategy was published, we have made remarkable progress in transforming how we deliver housing and support our residents. The former strategy was shaped by The Wigan Deal— which was a bold reimagining of how public services, communities, and individuals come together to build a stronger borough. It laid the foundations for change, shifting the focus from what the council does for people to what we can achieve with them, side by side.

We have made significant progress on how we deliver our public services, through a much deeper engagement with our communities, businesses, residents and stakeholders. This is embodied through Progress with Unity, which updates The Wigan Deal. We are now doubling down on that spirit of collective ambition. This approach is rooted in our belief that real progress happens when every neighbourhood, from Leigh to Ashton and Ince to Abram, counts—when no one is left behind. Housing sits at the heart of this vision—not just as a basic necessity, but as a vital force for health, fairness, prosperity, and belonging right here in our borough.

We're proud of how far we've come. From the growing communities in Wigan and Leigh town centres to the villages and towns of Standish, Shevington, Tyldesley and Atherton, we've built new homes, breathed new life into council housing, tackled homelessness head-on, helped more people live independently, and forged stronger ties with housing associations and local communities. But we know the job is far from done. Today's challenges—from rising costs and housing affordability gaps to the growing demand for specialist homes—call for bold, innovative solutions rooted in local strengths. This housing strategy builds on Wigan's clear and confident strategic path—aligned with Progress with Unity, the transformation of adult social care, wider public service reform, and the forthcoming Local Plan. Housing is central to our borough's wider goals around health, care, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. This strategy sharpens the focus on delivery, inclusion, and partnership—forging a more joined-up, ambitious housing system that reflects the real needs, hopes, and talents of Wigan borough residents.

At its heart, this strategy is about creating opportunity through housing. It means making sure more people can access safe, secure, affordable homes. It means offering support tailored to those who need it most and providing a rich mix of housing choices that respect and reflect the life journeys of everyone in our borough. It means raising standards, strengthening our communities, and building resilient neighbourhoods ready for tomorrow's challenges.

As a landlord, we are fully committed to doing right by our tenants. We know there's still work to be done—to meet the high expectations of our residents and ensure all council homes, whether in established areas like Atherton or newer estates like Golborne, are safe, well-maintained, and energy efficient. This strategy lays out a clear and ambitious pathway for change—one where tenants will soon see real, meaningful improvements in repairs, safety, and customer service. Through continued investment, innovation, and close working with our residents, we want to build homes and communities that the people of our borough can truly be proud of.

Importantly, this strategy also shines a light on the inspiring work already happening across the borough. Throughout the document, you'll find case studies showcasing the innovation, leadership, and partnership that drive our housing agenda—from new Extra Care schemes that help older people live with dignity and choice, to dedicated housing pathways supporting care leavers and young people. It highlights how we're working to strengthen the Private Rented Sector offer and how tenant voices are shaping improvements to council housing services. These stories go beyond outcomes—they speak to the values we hold dear: fairness, empowerment, and a shared sense of community.

We know that our housing future isn't something the council can deliver alone. It depends on the strength of partnerships—with housing associations, developers, the NHS, voluntary groups, and most importantly, the people of Wigan borough themselves. That's why this strategy is as much an invitation as a plan: to come together, to build together, and to ensure every home strengthens the fabric of our borough.

Through unity, and with Wigan spirit, we will keep pushing forward—creating homes and opportunities that help everyone thrive in this proud, connected community we call home.

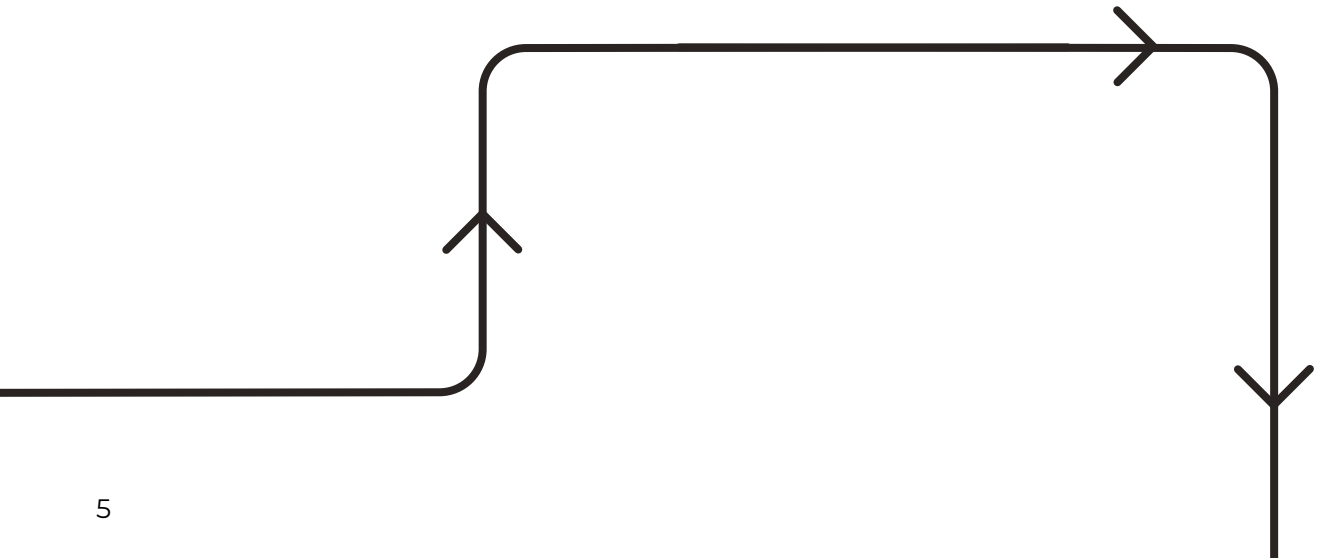
A Snapshot of Wigan's Housing Market

Housing Stock and Tenure

- Wigan has 151,815 dwellings with a vacancy rate of 2.8%, slightly above the national average of 2.75%.
- The majority of homes are houses (79.7%), with flats (9.5%) and bungalows (10.8%) making up the rest.
- Most homes are three-bedroom properties (54.2%), with two-bed homes at 28.2%, one-bed at 6.1%, and four or more bedrooms at 11.5%.
- Almost 20% of the housing stock was built before 1919, and 68.6% of dwellings are in Council Tax bands A or B, reflecting lower-value stock.
- 66.4% of households own their homes, 16.2% rent privately, and 17.5% live in affordable housing.
- There are 174 licensed HMOs, with 42% concentrated in Wigan North & Aspull.
- Satisfaction with home condition is high at 80.7%, although dissatisfaction is greatest in the private rented sector, affordable housing, older homes, and flats or terraces.

Housing Market and Affordability

- Median house prices in Wigan rose from £49,000 in 2000 to £175,000 in 2023, an increase of 257%, while lower quartile prices increased from £33,000 to £130,000, a rise of 294%.
- Wigan remains more affordable than the Greater Manchester, North West, and England averages, despite these strong price increases.
- The workplace affordability ratio is 5.8, which is better than the North West (6.1) and England (8.3), but affordability pressures remain due to relatively low incomes.
- Nearly a quarter of households earn under £18,200, while 35% earn £39,000 or more.
- Entry-level private renting requires a household income of £31,200, while entry-level home ownership requires £29,571, though both vary across the borough.
- Deposits significantly reduce income thresholds, but ownership remains largely unaffordable for low-income households and key workers.
- Private rents have risen from £472 in 2010 to £750 in 2023, with Local Housing Allowance shortfalls of £115–£499 per month across property sizes.



Older People and Specialist Housing Needs

- Over the next few decades, there will be a marked increase in the number and proportion of older residents. The population aged 65+ years is expected to increase by 29.2% by 2041.
- The population aged 65–74 will increase by 4,727, those 75–84 by 5,031, and those 85+ by 3,669.
- Older people predominantly live in owner-occupation (77.8%), with 16.4% in social rent and 5.9% in private rent.
- By 2041, there will be a need for 6,284 additional specialist C3 older persons' dwellings, 1,528 Extra Care units, and 575 residential care bedspaces.
- There is a particular demand for leasehold sheltered, enhanced sheltered, and Extra Care housing, both for sale and for rent.

Health, Disability, and Accessibility

- In 2023, 22.4% of residents have a disability, projected to rise to 23.6% by 2041.
- Mobility issues among older people will increase by 37%, hearing loss by 39%, and visual impairment by 29%.
- Mental health needs among older people are rising, with depression projected to increase by 29% and severe depression by 32%.
- 8.9% of dwellings are adapted or purpose-built for disability, with higher proportions in affordable housing (20.9%) and lower in owner-occupation (5.8%).
- Evidence suggests 4% of new homes should meet M4(3) wheelchair-accessible standards, while all others should meet M4(2) accessible/adaptable standards, requiring 35 wheelchair-accessible homes per year.

Adaptations, Repairs, and Support

- 8.5% of households require care or support to remain at home, rising to 38.8% among households aged 85+.
- The most needed improvements are better heating (22.1%), more insulation (15%), and double glazing (13.3%).
- The most needed adaptations are bathroom modifications (11.9%), internal handrails (8.9%), external handrails (8%), and stair or vertical lifts (7.4%).
- Many older households need practical support, with 33.6% requiring repairs and maintenance, 26.2% needing gardening assistance, 19.7% needing cleaning, 11.7% needing personal care, and 10.9% needing companionship or friendship.

Our Challenges

The borough requires approximately 972 new dwellings each year to meet forecasted demand. Many potential sites require expensive remediation before development, and there are challenges related to the capacity to deliver new homes, including infrastructure constraints and the availability of suitable sites.

The Wigan borough faces significant affordability and access challenges. Housing costs, including rising house prices and private rents, have outpaced many local incomes, making home ownership and private renting difficult for low-income households and key workers. Long waiting lists for social housing and the limited availability of affordable homes further restrict access, leaving many residents struggling to find suitable housing.

There is also a limited supply of suitable homes to meet local needs. The borough has a shortage of social housing, starter homes, and accommodation for older people. Limited downsizing options reduce the availability of larger homes for families, while the growing number of older residents increases demand for specialist housing such as Extra Care, residential care, and adapted dwellings.

Wigan's council-owned housing stock benefits from a service that has become far more responsive to tenants, with the council listening more closely to residents' concerns and feedback. However, the repairs service still requires significant improvement, as delays and inconsistencies continue to affect tenants' satisfaction. While progress has been made in engaging with residents and addressing their needs, ongoing investment and better service delivery are needed to ensure all council homes meet modern standards and provide a consistently high-quality experience.

Housing quality and condition remain a concern in certain areas. Older properties, flats, and terraces often require improvements in heating, insulation, glazing, and accessibility adaptations. Ensuring that homes are safe, well-maintained, and suitable for all residents continues to be a key challenge for the borough.

The private rented sector is under pressure, with rents rising faster than wages and the quality of housing varying across the borough. Many tenants' report dissatisfaction with the standard and affordability of private rented homes, highlighting a need for improvements in this sector.

Under-occupation and empty homes further limit housing availability. A high proportion of owner-occupied homes are under-used, restricting options for families and younger residents. Additionally, long-term empty properties reduce the effective housing supply, representing wasted housing stock that could be brought back into use.

Finally, there are significant support and adaptation needs for older people. Many older households require home adaptations and practical support to live independently, with needs increasing sharply for those aged 75 and over. Current provision of wheelchair-accessible and adapted homes is insufficient to meet this growing demand, emphasising the importance of accessible, age-appropriate housing in the borough.

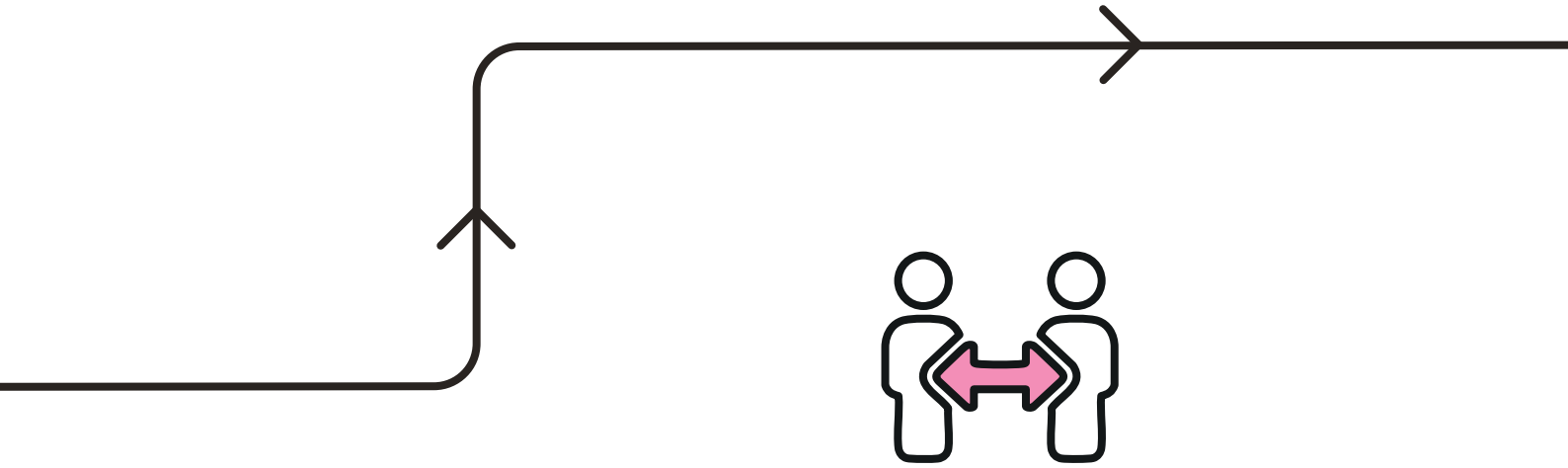
Linking Evidence, Resident Insight, and Strategic Priorities

The development of Wigan Borough's Housing Strategy has been guided by a robust evidence base and extensive resident engagement, ensuring that the borough's housing priorities reflect both local need and lived experience. Analysis of housing stock, market trends, affordability pressures, and demographic changes highlights several key challenges. Rising house prices and private rents, combined with limited social housing and a growing older population, create barriers to access for low-income households, young people, and key workers. Many homes, particularly older properties and flats, require improvements and adaptations, while the private rented sector faces issues with affordability and quality. Under-occupation and long-term empty homes reduce effective housing supply, and despite improvements, the council's repairs service and maintenance still require further enhancement.

Residents' voices have been central to shaping the strategy. Survey respondents consistently highlighted priorities including the delivery of more social rented homes, bringing long-term empty homes back into use, increasing low-cost home ownership options, supporting older people to live well at home, improving the quality of the private rented sector, and helping first-time buyers access home ownership. These insights have directly informed the strategy, ensuring that the Council's objectives address both the immediate pressures in the housing market and the broader aspirations of the community.

The strategy is structured around five overarching themes that translate evidence and resident priorities into actionable goals:

- **Inclusive Housing Delivery — Housing Growth Aligned to Local Needs:** Ensuring new homes meet the diverse needs of Wigan's population, from affordable housing for families and young people to specialist and adaptable homes for older residents.
- **Creating Inclusive Housing Opportunities for Everyone:** Addressing barriers to access, supporting first-time buyers, and improving affordability across tenure types.
- **Generational Unity — Housing That Supports Life Journeys:** Providing housing options that enable residents to remain in their communities throughout different life stages, including downsizing opportunities and specialist older person accommodation.
- **Council Leadership — Excellence as a Landlord:** Continuing to improve services for council tenants, including repairs and maintenance, while fostering engagement and responsiveness.
- **Resilient Communities — Healthy Homes in Thriving, Connected Neighbourhoods:** Ensuring homes are safe, well-maintained, accessible, and integrated with local services, supporting strong, connected communities.



Inclusive Housing Delivery — Housing Growth Aligned to Local Needs

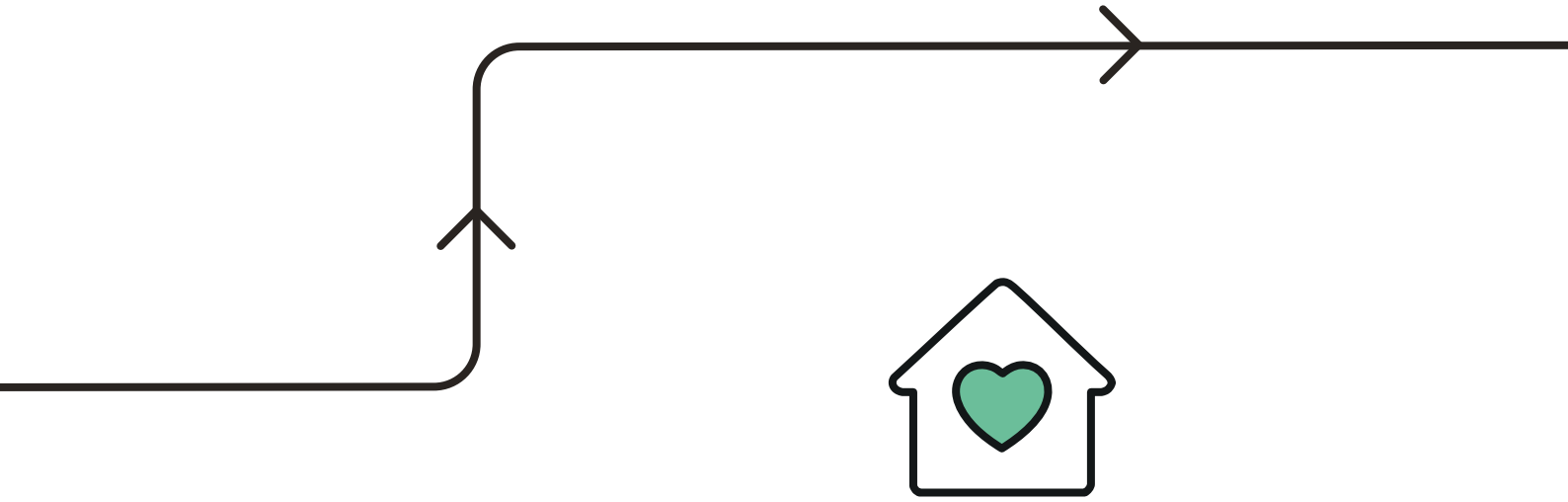
Delivering new homes is essential to achieving our vision of Progress with Unity—ensuring that everyone in our community has a safe, secure place to call home and real opportunities to thrive. But it's about more than just building houses. It's about creating the foundations for vibrant, inclusive neighbourhoods where people feel connected, supported, and proud of where they live. That means investing in the right types of homes in the right places, shaped by local needs and aspirations. It also means ensuring that new developments contribute to wider goals—including health and wellbeing, climate resilience, access to services, and economic opportunity. Through strong partnerships and a shared commitment to quality and inclusion, we are building not only homes, but stronger, fairer communities for the future.

The Homes our Borough Needs
We need to deliver 972 new homes each year.

We have a strong and consistent track record in delivering new homes, with current housing delivery remaining robust. To maintain this momentum and ensure the borough continues to meet its future housing needs, the council is taking proactive steps to identify opportunities for a diverse range of homes across all tenures, including on council-owned land.

While the borough already benefits from a number of housing and employment sites allocated through the Places for Everyone Plan, the council is now preparing its own Local Plan, Planning for the Future to 2040. This new plan will provide up-to-date, locally tailored policies and the flexibility to allocate additional sites specific to Wigan borough's needs.

As part of this, six sites with the capacity to deliver 4,295 homes will be allocated for housing development. These sites have long been part of our housing land supply and are now being brought forward through the Local Plan to ensure they are delivered in a sustainable and coordinated way. Their allocation will help drive the regeneration of towns and neighbourhoods, encourage sustainable growth and investment, safeguard the borough's important environmental and historic assets, and support the delivery of essential infrastructure—such as transport links, schools, healthcare, and community facilities—so that new and existing communities have the services and amenities they need to thrive.



How We Influence What Homes Are Built – And Where

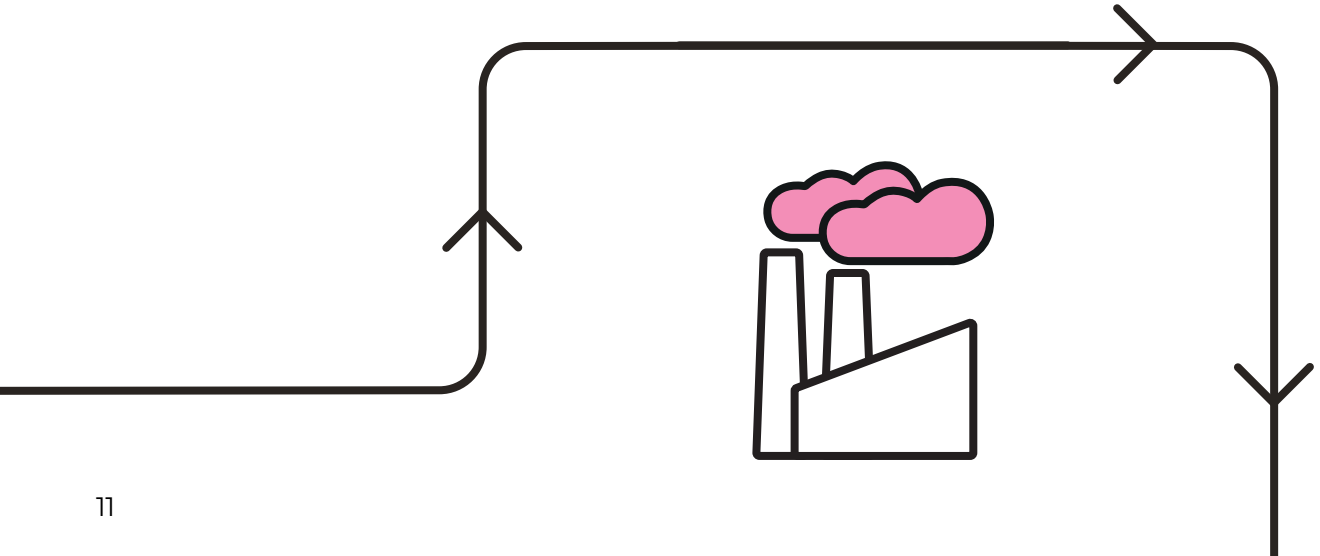
Wigan Council is committed to shaping a housing offer that meets the needs of our communities now and into the future. While we do not directly control all new housing development, we have a range of tools and levers that give us real influence over what is built and where. These include:

- **Setting a clear and ambitious vision** for housing across the borough– one that supports inclusive growth, strong communities, and healthy neighbourhoods.
- **Articulating our priorities clearly to the market**, ensuring developers and housing providers understand the types of homes we want in different locations, and why, with a Housing Enabling and Development Team set up to do just that.
- **Using the planning system proactively** to align housing delivery with our wider strategic objectives– backed by strong evidence and up-to-date local plans.
- **Negotiating effectively** with developers and registered providers to secure the right mix of homes, including genuinely affordable housing and specialist accommodation.
- **Unlocking and enabling sites** through targeted use of funding, infrastructure investment, and public realm improvements, especially where market challenges exist.
- **Forming strategic delivery partnerships** where appropriate, giving the council greater influence over design, tenure, and sustainability, while sharing risk and reward with trusted partners.
- **Direct delivery of new homes**, where we retain full control over the type, quality, and location of housing– enabling us to meet specific local needs.

Westwood Park – Infrastructure-Led Regeneration

Westwood Park, a major brownfield site just over a mile from Wigan town centre, has been unlocked for development through significant investment in local infrastructure. Central to this was the £20 million A49 Link Road, opened in June 2020, which provides direct access from the M6 to the town centre, greatly improving connectivity and positioning the site as a new gateway to Wigan.

Alongside the road investment, the Council has prepared a Planning Framework to guide delivery of around 420 homes, employment space, and green infrastructure, all within walking distance of town centre amenities and public transport hubs. This proactive, infrastructure-led approach ensures Westwood Park can support housing growth, economic development, and sustainable regeneration in line with Wigan's Economic Vision and Strategic Regeneration Framework.



Brownfield First, Bringing More Sites Forward

As a local authority with a substantial land portfolio dispersed throughout the borough, we recognise the critical role our land plays in meeting housing needs and supporting sustainable growth. Our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) guides the identification and assessment of suitable parcels for residential development, including sites within our own ownership.

We are firmly committed to prioritising brownfield development—this approach aligns with the strong direction set by the Places for Everyone plan and reflects the expectations of our communities. By making full use of previously developed land within urban areas, we can bring neglected sites back into productive use, reduce pressure on greenfield and green belt land, and foster vibrant, sustainable neighbourhoods. Delivering new homes closer to existing infrastructure, transport links, schools, healthcare, and other essential services helps strengthen our communities and ensures residents benefit from accessible amenities.

In support of local housing needs, the council has identified underused council-owned sites, typically located in or near established neighbourhoods, with the potential to deliver approximately 1,000 new homes. With a mix of larger strategic sites and smaller infill opportunities identified across areas including Abram, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Atherton, Aspull, Bryn, Douglas, Golborne, Hindley, Ince, Leigh, Lowton, New Springs, Orrell, Pemberton, Tyldesley, Whelley, Wigan, and Worsley Mesnes, there is significant potential to diversify our housing pipeline and accelerate the delivery of new homes across the borough.

Some of these sites will be retained by the council as part of our Direct Delivery Programme to provide low-carbon, affordable, and supported housing. Others may be sold to developers or housing associations through a transparent “front door” process. This flexible and pragmatic approach allows us to select the most effective and timely delivery route for each site—whether through retention or disposal.



Transforming our Brownfield Sites

The Cotton Works is a flagship example of brownfield regeneration—a transformative £250 million project that will turn the historic Eckersley Mills site into a thriving mixed-use neighbourhood with over 800 new homes, commercial spaces, and community facilities, while preserving the area’s heritage. This development, alongside other brownfield projects across the borough, highlights our proactive approach to delivering high-quality housing and economic growth by making the most of existing land and infrastructure. Prioritising brownfield sites is central to the council’s vision of sustainable regeneration and achieving the target of nearly 19,000 new homes by 2039.

Delivering Affordable Housing

Affordable housing plays a vital role in creating strong, inclusive communities by ensuring people of all incomes can access secure, high-quality homes close to jobs, schools, and essential services.

In the recent Spending Review, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced a significant increase in funding for the Social and Affordable Homes Programme to accelerate the delivery of affordable homes across the country. Wigan Council welcome this challenge and are ready to step up—working with our partners to secure funding, unlock sites, and deliver the high-quality, affordable homes our residents need.

We will deliver affordable housing through multiple routes, including planning obligations on new developments and the Social and Affordable Homes Programme led by housing associations:

Planning obligations are secured through Section 106 (S106) agreements, which are legal agreements between developers and the council. These require developers to provide affordable housing directly or contribute funding toward it as part of new housing projects.

The Social and Affordable Homes Programme is a government funding programme that enables housing associations to build new affordable homes. It helps bridge the gap between development costs and what residents can afford, supporting a range of tenures from affordable rent to shared ownership. Without SAHP funding, many schemes simply wouldn't be viable. A new 10-year programme from 2026 will see £39 billion invested to boost social and affordable housebuilding, with an ambition for at least 60% of the homes delivered to be Social Rent.

Wigan Council's Leadership in Delivering Affordable and Specialist Housing

We have a proven track record of enabling the delivery of affordable housing at scale. Over the past five years, more than 2,147 new affordable homes have been delivered in the Wigan borough, including 471 completed in 2024/25 alone.

This strong performance demonstrates our ability to meet local housing needs efficiently and with real momentum. Committed to sustaining this leadership, we will continue to make affordable housing delivery a core focus of our wider vision to build inclusive, thriving communities. By taking a proactive approach to land use, strengthening partnerships, and focusing on targeted, strategic delivery, we will not only address current housing demands but also plan confidently for the future.

As well as playing an enabling role, we also deliver new affordable housing directly, allowing us to respond to needs that are often unmet by the wider market- particularly homes for older residents and vulnerable groups. With the population aged 65 and over expected to grow by 29.2% by 2041, the demand for specialist housing such as sheltered housing, Extra Care, co-housing, and residential care is set to increase significantly, with an estimated need for over 8,300 additional units. The council's direct delivery role enables us to lead on delivering these niche housing markets that may not be a priority for other developers.

Affordable and Specialist Housing Delivery by Housing Associations in Wigan Borough

It is not just the council that is bringing forward new affordable homes across the borough, our housing association partners are very active in **utilising both public and private investment**. These schemes are developed to align with the council's requirements for tenure, location, and housing mix, ensuring they meet our housing needs as closely as possible. We will continue working with our housing association partners to ensure new developments align with our priorities. By supporting them to access funding and leveraging public and private investment, we are committed to increasing the supply of high-quality, sustainable homes across Wigan.

Affordable Housing delivery

Waterside Point is a transformative £37 million brownfield regeneration led by Your Housing Group in Leigh, delivering 236 affordable homes (123 shared ownership, 113 affordable rent). Set on an 11 acre former industrial site, it replaces dilapidated units with modern canal side housing, integrated transport accessibility, and local amenities. The scheme includes a thoughtful mix of tenure types, managed via a Local Lettings Agreement, and provides community benefits such as canal-side public realm enhancements, school parking, apprenticeships, and refurbished high street units for SMEs and charities. Funded by Wigan and Homes England, the project meets diverse housing needs, supports independent living transitions, and contributes significantly to Leigh's town centre regeneration—earning Premier Quality Awards in recognition of its excellence.

In early 2023, Jigsaw Homes, working in partnership with local developer the Heaton Group, delivered a flagship 100% affordable housing scheme at St Peters, Bryn. The scheme provided 10 family homes and 12 supported living apartments designed as 'Move On' accommodation to help residents on their journey toward independent living.

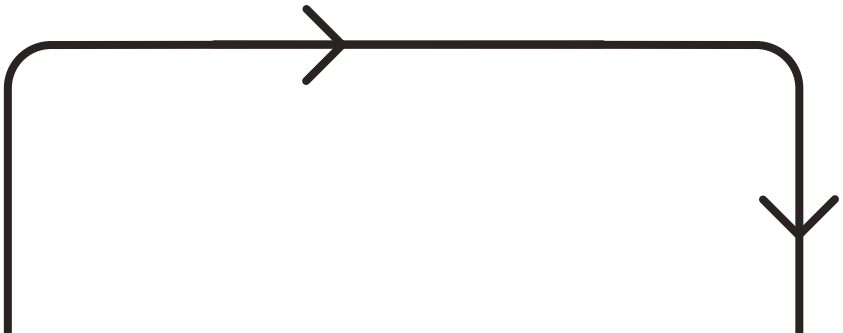
Completed in 2024, the Barracks Road scheme marked a major step forward in affordable housing delivery for Bickershaw, an area that had seen little new build development in recent years. Brought forward by Jigsaw Homes in partnership with Stanley Land and Homes, the project delivered 15 modern, energy-efficient homes comprising five two-bedroom houses and ten one-bedroom apartments. The scheme not only addressed diverse local housing needs but also contributed to the regeneration and growth of the wider community.

Torus' 2025 development at Frog Lane represents a landmark regeneration project on the edge of Wigan town centre. Transforming a disused recycling depot into a vibrant new community, the scheme delivered 60 affordable rent homes—56 three-bedroom and four two-bedroom houses—funded through Homes England Strategic Partnership support.

This high-quality development removed a long-standing blight, reinstated the street scene, and boosted affordable housing supply in a location with strong demand, providing real long-term benefits for local residents.









Build to Rent

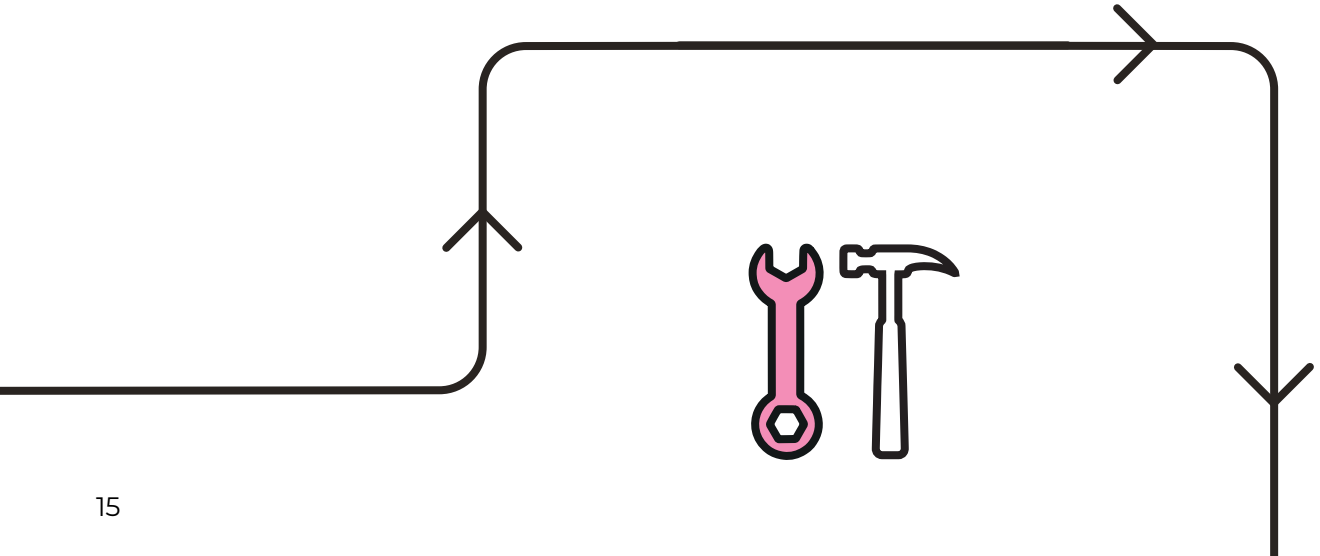
Our last housing strategy laid the foundations for Build to Rent which is now well established in our borough, with Build to Rent being a part of key developments like Tullach (Pemberton Colliery) and the recently approved Mosley Common scheme by Kellen Homes and Sigma, transforming former industrial and brownfield land into high-quality, purpose-built rental communities. These professionally managed homes, designed specifically for the rental market, offer tenants greater security, modern amenities, and flexible lease terms compared to traditional private renting. By increasing the supply of good-quality, rental homes, Build to Rent meets the growing demand from a diverse range of residents—including young professionals, families, and older people.

We will ensure that these developments deliver housing opportunities for people across all income levels. To achieve this, the emerging Local Plan includes a policy requiring a minimum of 20% affordable housing provision within Build to Rent schemes. This will ensure that local residents on lower to moderate incomes can access secure, affordable rental homes within these developments. Through this approach, we will harness the full potential of Build to Rent to diversify housing options, address affordability challenges, and foster vibrant, inclusive communities where people from all backgrounds and incomes can thrive.

Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding

Self-build and community-led housing are innovative approaches that put people and communities at the heart of creating new homes. Whether it's individuals designing and building their own homes or local groups developing affordable housing projects, these models offer more choice, flexibility, and control over housing. Together, they provide an important alternative to traditional housing delivery, supporting a diverse and inclusive housing market. Council land disposals could support an uplift in this type of development in Wigan.

We are committed to supporting and expanding self-build and custom-build housing as a vital part of delivering diverse, high-quality homes across the borough. Through Policy H2 in the Draft Local Plan, we will work closely with developers and self-build communities to enable a sustainable, responsive delivery of self-build and custom-build homes. This will be driven by local demand, viability, and opportunities across the borough. We will help to unlock the right sites, encourage a balanced mix of homes, and maintain a robust supply pipeline. Our focus is not only on numbers but on creating thriving, inclusive communities where people want to live, work, and grow.









St William's Church

St William's Church in Ince, Wigan, was redeveloped into 27 affordable homes through a partnership between Housing People, Building Communities (HPBC) and Prima Housing Group. The Archdiocese of Liverpool gifted the church, presbytery, and adjacent land to support community-led affordable housing. Using HPBC's 'sweat equity' model, future residents contributed 500 hours of labour—such as painting and landscaping—in exchange for a £10k reduction in their deposit. The homes, aimed at low to moderate-income households, include a mix of 1, 2, and 3-bedroom apartments and new build houses, all built to Passivhaus standards to deliver exceptional energy efficiency and low running costs, reflecting both environmental sustainability and local needs. Supported by Homes England and GMCA grants, the project also offered volunteering and training opportunities for veterans and students. Wigan Council aided the planning process. The development has won a UK Housing Award plus four others, highlighting its social, economic, and community benefits.

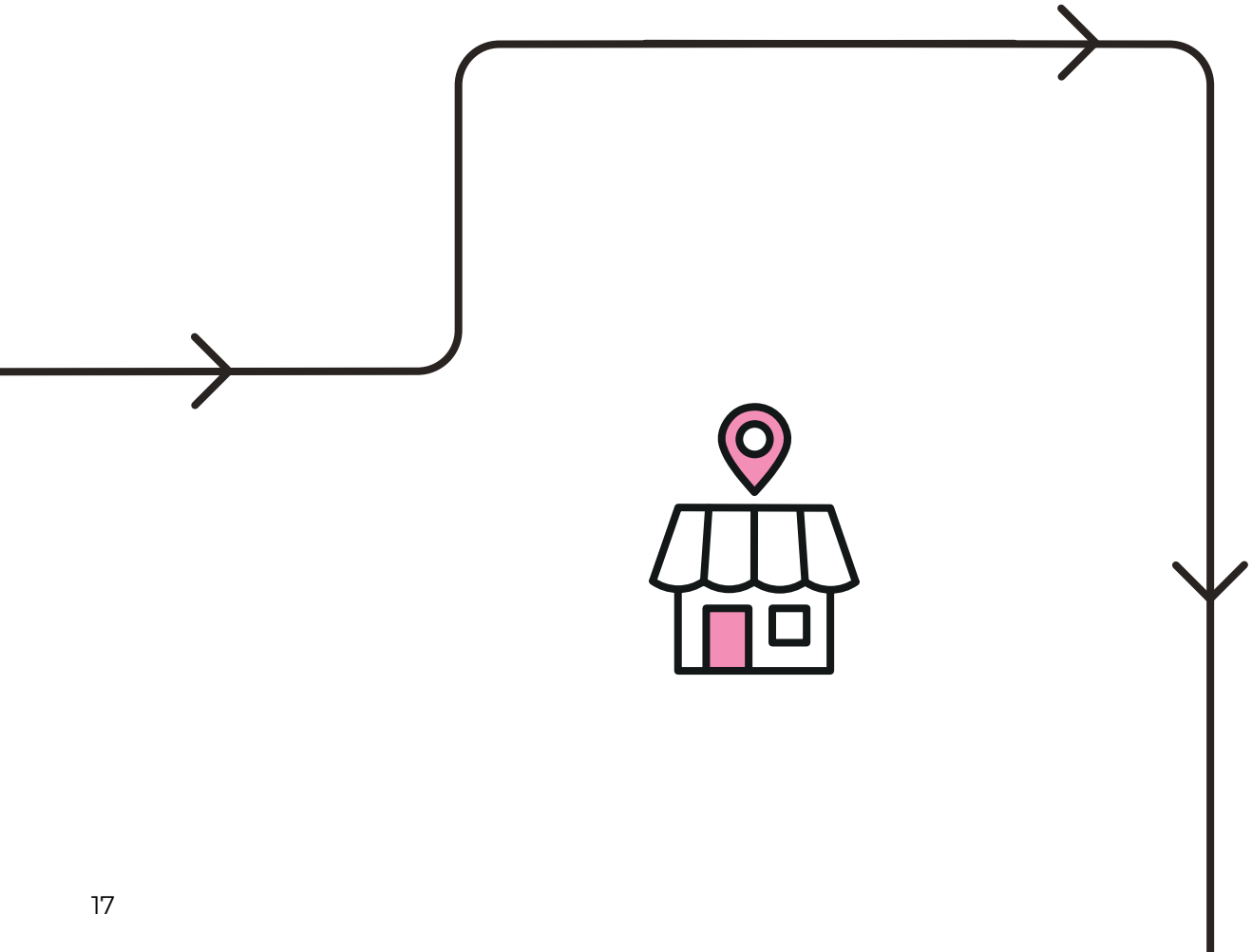
One resident said 'I was desperate to get on to the property ladder to gain security for me and my children but just couldn't see how that would be possible as I wasn't able to save up for a deposit. The sweat equity model has given me the chance as a single parent to realise my dream. Me, my mum, dad and sister loved working on not just my home, but the others William's homes alongside the people who are now my neighbours to create this lovely little community.'

Vibrant Town Centre Living: Building Great Places to Call Home

Regenerating our town centres is central to our vision for inclusive growth and thriving communities. Each town and local centre plays a vital role in shaping local identity, supporting everyday life, and creating places where people want to live, work, and spend time. As retail habits continue to shift—especially with the rise of online shopping—our centres must evolve to remain vibrant and relevant. Consumers now expect more convenience, experiences, and community-focused spaces, so our centres need to offer a mix of retail, leisure, and services that go beyond traditional shopping to meet these changing demands.

This strategy embraces that change, placing housing, culture, community uses, and sustainable transport at the heart of town centre regeneration. The draft Local Plan sets out an ambitious vision for the regeneration of the borough's ten town centres and local centres, aligning closely with Mission 2 of Progress with Unity to support flourishing communities. We want our centres to be more than places to shop—they should be places people feel proud of, with a distinctive character, a strong social offer, and a diverse, high-quality built environment that meets the needs of current and future generations.

Wigan town centre's regeneration is focused on creating a vibrant, mixed-use community that combines quality, affordable housing with thriving commercial, leisure, and cultural spaces. Key priorities include enhancing public spaces, improving accessibility through sustainable transport, preserving the town's unique heritage, and reducing vacancy by redeveloping brownfield sites. The strategy supports local businesses and job growth while ensuring safe, inclusive environments. Collaboration with residents and partners is central to delivering a town centre where people want to live, work, and spend time.







Investing in Wigan Town Centre

Our flagship scheme is the Fettlers project—a major £135 million regeneration scheme transforming the former Galleries Shopping Centre. Led by the council in partnership with Cityheart, Fettlers will deliver over 400 new homes across a mix of tenures, catering to diverse residents from young professionals to families and older adults. Beyond housing, the development will introduce leisure and entertainment venues, a modernised market hall, a new hotel to boost tourism, and vibrant public spaces including a landscaped square for events. Fettlers embodies the council's ambition to revitalise Wigan town centre as a dynamic, inclusive place for living, working, and community life.



In Leigh, the “We Love Leigh” programme, backed by over £32 million, is spearheading the transformation of Ellesmere Street into a vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhood that celebrates the canal and historic environment while delivering quality homes and workspaces. At the heart of this regeneration is the ambition to create a diverse range of housing options—modern apartments, family homes, and adaptable spaces—that will support a thriving, well-connected town centre community.

The vision is being guided by the Leigh Neighbourhood Board, which brings together local residents, businesses, and public sector partners to shape priorities and oversee delivery. This collaborative approach ensures that regeneration reflects community aspirations, strengthens local identity, and creates opportunities that work for everyone.

As part of Leigh’s 10-year regeneration plan, the new neighbourhood will be integrated with green spaces, walking and cycling routes, and improved public transport links, encouraging active lifestyles and sustainable travel. Quality of life is central, with easy access to shops, leisure facilities, and cultural venues woven into the design of new development.

In **Ashton-in-Makerfield**, the #OurFutureAshton project, supported by £6.6 million in government funding, is revitalising the town centre to attract residents, businesses, and visitors. A key focus of the regeneration is to create a welcoming, mixed-use environment where people can live, work, and enjoy local amenities. The plan includes delivering new high-quality homes, including affordable options, designed to enhance the town’s residential appeal and provide modern, convenient living close to shops, services, and transport links. By improving public spaces and accessibility, the project aims to foster a strong sense of community and promote sustainable, vibrant town centre living.

Other towns including Atherton, Hindley, Tyldesley, and Golborne are part of the borough-wide vision for town centre regeneration, with plans to enhance their vitality, support local businesses, and improve residents’ quality of life. While specific regeneration strategies for these areas are still being developed, we are committed to ensuring they benefit from future investment and growth opportunities as part of the overall borough regeneration programme.

Building the Right Type of Home, in the Right Place

It's not just about building more homes—it's about making sure the right type of home is delivered, of the right size, in the right place. Strengthening our housing offer means understanding and responding to the specific needs of communities across the borough, ensuring that new supply aligns with local demand and supports a well-balanced, inclusive housing market.

Our evidence benefits from a highly granular and detailed dataset on dwelling type and size preferences, broken down by tenure and sub-area. This provides a robust evidence base for action, enabling local planners to understand nuanced variations in housing needs across the market, affordable/social rented, and affordable homeownership sectors. For instance, borough-wide, there is a consistently strong demand for 3-bedroom homes across all tenures—especially for families—while the data also highlights the important role of 1-bedroom flats and smaller bungalows in meeting affordable rented needs. Sub-area analysis adds further value: for example, affordable homeownership might focus on larger family homes in Ashton-in-Makerfield, while Atherton and Golborne show increased demand for accessible bungalow provision. This level of detail enables precise interventions.

By leveraging this intelligence, we will strategically rebalance housing supply—delivering homes that are not just needed in number, but are suited to the changing demographic, economic, and social needs of its communities. This targeted, evidence-led approach supports the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods and a housing market that works better for everyone.

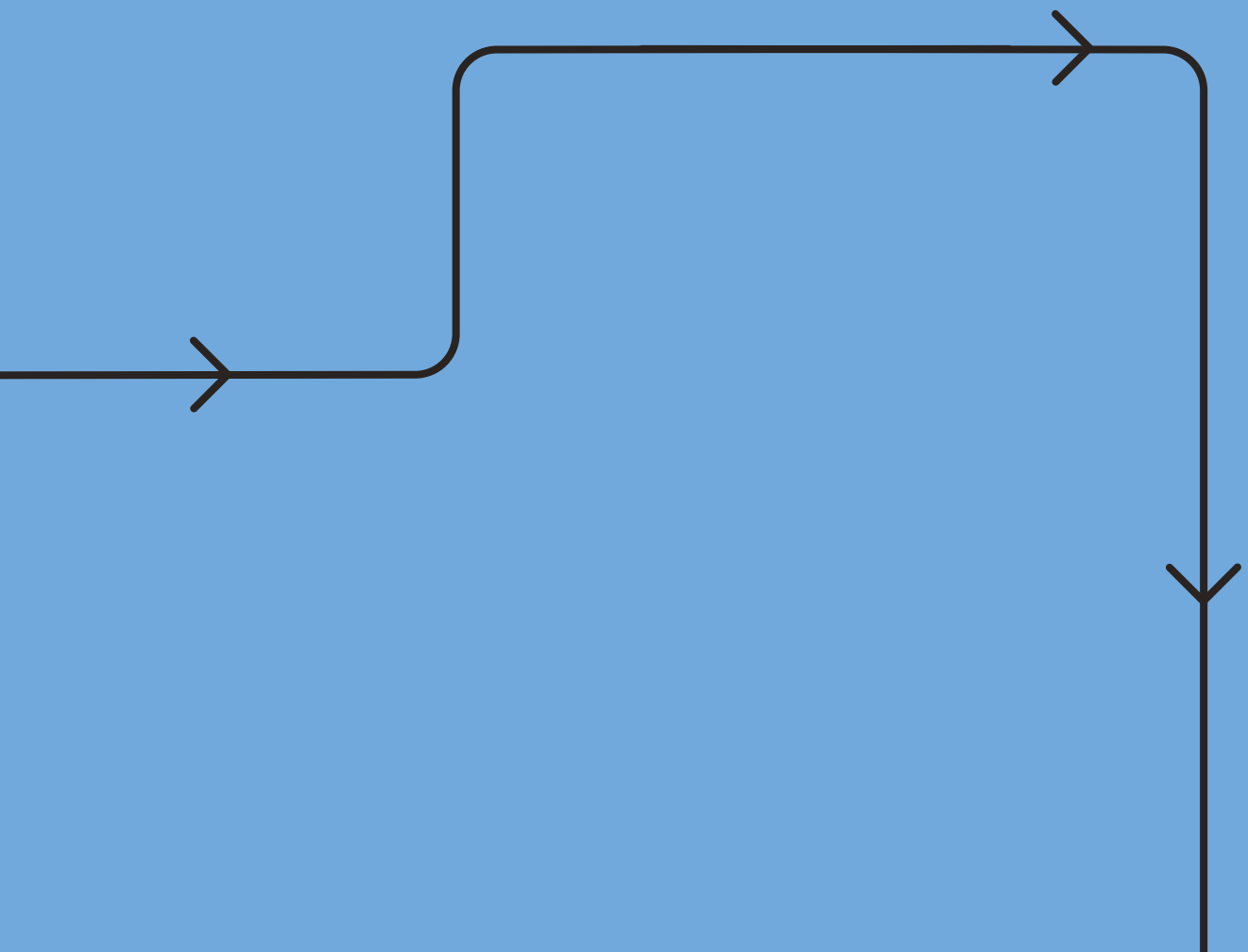
High Quality Design

High-quality design is essential to create vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable communities across the borough. It underpins our commitments set out in the second mission of Progress with Unity, to ensure that towns and neighbourhoods flourish as places where people want to live, work, and visit. Good design fosters safe, welcoming environments that cater to people of all ages and abilities, supporting accessibility and inclusivity throughout the borough. Beyond aesthetics, thoughtful design addresses wider challenges such as climate change, enhances local biodiversity, and encourages healthier lifestyles. To maintain these standards, all major planning applications and housing developments of five or more homes will need to include a clear design statement demonstrating alignment with Wigan Council's ten key design characteristics. This approach ensures new developments are adaptable, long-lasting, and truly responsive to the needs of our diverse community.

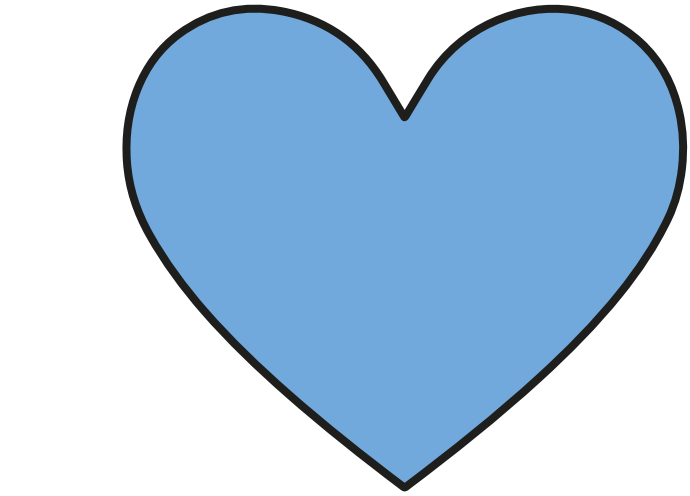
Wigan Council's 10 key design characteristics, as outlined in our planning documents, emphasize creating well-designed, sustainable, and attractive places. These characteristics include context, nature, identity, use, resources, movement, built form, public space, homes and buildings, and lifespan. These principles are designed to ensure developments are sustainable, enhance the local area, and attract investment.

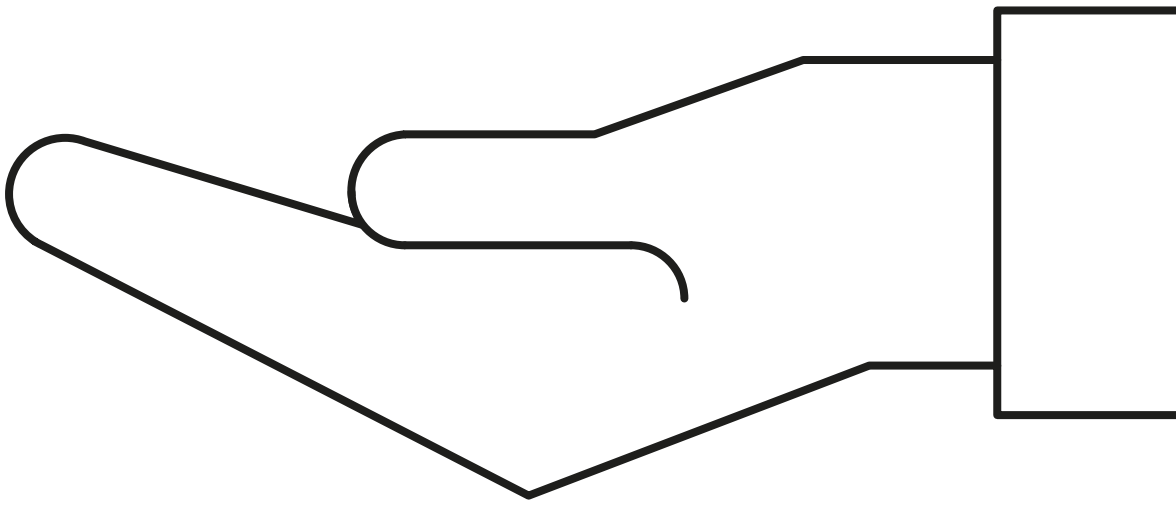


Creating Inclusive Housing Opportunities for Everyone



Strong communities need strong housing markets—ones that work for everyone. In our borough, this means making sure that people at every stage of life and income level can access a safe, secure, and affordable home. A housing market that only works for some creates instability, drives inequality, and places pressure on public services. That's why it's essential to provide a range of options—whether it's helping people into low-cost homeownership, improving standards and affordability in the Private Rented Sector, or ensuring there are enough genuinely affordable homes to rent. It also means making sure that no one is left behind—particularly those facing disadvantage, discrimination, or the risk of homelessness. A balanced and fair housing market gives people choice, supports independence, and helps build resilient, healthy communities across the Wigan borough..





The Homelessness Solutions Service

Our Homelessness Solutions Service plays a vital role **in supporting people who are experiencing housing difficulties or are at risk of becoming homeless.** While many people may initially view council housing as the most desirable or straightforward solution, the reality is that demand far exceeds supply, and a council home is not a realistic outcome for most. Instead, the service focuses on helping individuals and families understand and access the full range of housing options available—whether that's private renting, supported accommodation, mutual exchange, or affordable homeownership.

At its core, the Homelessness Solutions Service is built on partnership between the Council and residents. Officers are there to listen, offer tailored advice, and work hard to identify the most suitable and sustainable housing solutions. However, success also depends on active engagement from service users—being open to exploring different housing options, providing necessary information, and taking practical steps to address their situation.

A major focus of the service's prevention work is helping people remain in their existing accommodation wherever it is safe and possible to do so. This includes working with tenants and landlords to put measures in place that make tenancies viable and sustainable. If a move is ultimately required, the service supports residents to plan this in a managed, proactive way rather than as a crisis response.

The goal goes beyond simply finding a roof over someone's head. It is about helping residents secure a safe, stable, and long-term home that meets their needs and enables them to move forward with their lives. Through this shared responsibility and person-centred approach, the service plays a vital role in preventing homelessness and improving outcomes across the borough.

Homelessness Solutions At Work

A working man became homeless after being asked to leave a friend's house, forcing him to sleep in his car while working night shifts. Although emergency accommodation was offered, he declined. His Homeless Officer quickly contacted a trusted landlord, secured a property viewing, and arranged a rapid move. With the council covering the first month's rent and him paying the deposit, he moved in swiftly. At one point he considered giving up work, but timely support meant he kept his job and gained a stable home.







Affordable Housing Choices

Despite generally lower house prices and rents in Wigan Borough compared to Greater Manchester and the wider North West, affordability remains a significant challenge for many residents. With lower quartile house prices at £130,000 and median rents reaching £750 per month, many households face considerable pressure, especially when income thresholds are factored in.

Entry-level renting requires a minimum income of around £31,200, while buying even a lower quartile property demands an income close to £29,571. Yet, for key workers and those on minimum or living wages, these costs are often beyond reach, with some spending up to 40% of their income on rent alone. This persistent affordability gap drives many households into financial strain, limiting their ability to secure stable housing and increasing vulnerability to housing insecurity and related social challenges.

Affordable housing options are so important to address these challenges. **We ensure that a diverse range of affordable housing options, designed to meet local needs, are made available in our borough**. Through negotiations with developers, we typically secure social and affordable rented homes primarily allocated by the council and housing associations through waiting lists and nomination agreements, targeting low-income households in greatest need.

While our priority is to secure social and affordable homes for rent, expanding homeownership opportunities remains an important focus across the borough. In Wigan South for example, affordable housing accounts for 27.5% of the market, and when combined with private rented homes, nearly four out of every ten properties are rented. Some areas still require more affordable housing options—both for rent and ownership—while others face a lack of diversity in their housing market.

Expanding access to affordable homeownership helps to create a more balanced and inclusive housing market across the borough, whilst helping first-time buyers get onto the housing ladder. Facilitating more residents to own their homes ensures a resilient, thriving community where essential workers are retained and the local economy benefits. This is why we have our own homeownership product, the Wigan Council Equity Loan Scheme. The scheme assists qualifying purchasers in buying selected new build homes by providing an equity loan covering 30% of the purchase price, reducing the amount buyers need to fund through a deposit and mortgage. We will also be looking at whether we can create a home ownership solution for people trapped in the private rented sector, through a rent to purchase scheme where a tenant pays a higher rent to cover their deposit.

Additionally, First Homes are offered with discounts of 30% on market prices in designated areas or sites where local evidence demonstrates a need. These homes target first-time buyers and those with a local connection who might otherwise be unable to afford homeownership. The sale and allocation of affordable homeownership homes are managed by the council or its development partners. This negotiated approach ensures a balanced mix of affordable tenures that supports diverse households across Wigan.

Equity Loan Case Study – Supporting Local First-Time Buyers

A young couple from the local area, both living with their parents and working nearby, achieved their dream of owning a home thanks to the Council's Equity Loan Scheme.

The couple purchased a new build property in Standish, valued at around £215,000, with a 5% deposit of approximately £11,000. To help bridge the affordability gap, the Council provided a 30% equity loan, enabling them to step onto the property ladder for the first time.

This case study highlights how the scheme is supporting local people to remain in the communities where they live and work, providing affordable homeownership opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach for many first-time buyers.

Delivering Better Outcomes for Renters

Across Wigan borough,, the proportion of households living in the Private Rented Sector increased from 5.4% in 2001 to 16.2% in 2021, equating to 22,761 households. This significant growth highlights how the Private Rented Sector has become a crucial part of the local housing market—now only slightly smaller than the affordable housing sector—playing an increasingly important role in meeting housing needs.

Our evidence tells us that our local Private Rented Sector accommodates a diverse range of households, many with limited incomes and facing affordability pressures. A significant portion of the homes are older, which, combined with higher tenant turnover, contributes to housing instability and potential quality issues. While most tenants' report satisfaction with repairs, dissatisfaction is notably higher among those in older properties and certain housing types, indicating ongoing challenges with maintenance and landlord responsiveness. Overall, these factors point to a vulnerable tenant population living in sometimes poor-quality, unaffordable housing, underscoring the need for targeted efforts to improve standards and support within the sector.

Most landlords in the Private Rented Sector are responsible and provide good-quality, well-maintained homes for their tenants. However, some do not fulfil their obligations to the same standard—neglecting property upkeep or failing to offer secure and stable tenancies. This can leave a minority of tenants facing uncertainty, higher costs, and poor living conditions, with the greatest impact felt by those who are already vulnerable. We have already taken significant steps to improve the sector, including targeted enforcement and landlord engagement to raise standards and support tenants.

The introduction of the Renters' Rights Act — set to be the biggest shake-up of the sector in a generation—will bring new protections for tenants and greater clarity around responsibilities. We will focus on maximising the positive impact of this legislation, building on its progress to ensure that all tenants benefit from safer, fairer, and more secure private rented homes.



Using Empty Properties to Provide Much Needed Homes

Wigan Council has launched a pilot Empty Homes Investment Scheme as part of its Empty Homes Strategy, closely linked with its Ethical Lettings Agency (ELA). The initiative encourages owners of long-term empty homes to bring them back into use by offering them for rent through the ELA. Under the scheme, properties are refurbished—with up-front financial support from the council, recouped through the rental income —and let as long-term, settled accommodation to help reduce the number of households living in nightly paid accommodation.

Support for Landlords

We know that many landlords will need support as the Renters Rights Act is introduced and to this end, we have held briefing sessions to provide landlords with timely information and advice and are developing ongoing communications to support both landlords and tenants through the forthcoming legislative changes.

Central to this approach is our Landlord Hub—an interactive platform that enables landlords and letting agents to connect with the council, access up-to-date resources, register properties and tenancy documents securely, and obtain practical tools such as model tenancy agreements. The Hub also facilitates growth by helping landlords interested in expanding their portfolios to identify empty properties for sale.

Complementing these services, we have broadened our role to offer tenancy relations support beyond enforcement, including mediation, deposit dispute resolution, and advice on rights and responsibilities, helping to foster better relationships and higher standards across the sector.



Promoting Good Landlords

Wigan Council is proud to be a partner in the Greater Manchester Good Landlord Charter, launched in 2025 as a voluntary scheme that encourages landlords to commit to standards beyond legal requirements. The charter recognises landlords who demonstrate full legal compliance and actively engage with the implementation unit to meet enhanced criteria. By joining, landlords receive public recognition through listing on the Good Landlord website, helping them build trust and attract responsible tenants.

For tenants, the charter provides a clear and accessible way to identify landlords who offer safe, well-managed, and fair rental homes. This regional initiative supports Wigan Council's wider efforts to improve the Private Rented Sector by raising standards, enhancing tenant confidence, and fostering positive landlord-tenant relationships that contribute to a more stable and sustainable rental market.

Support for Tenants

Supporting tenants is just as important as working with landlords to ensure access to safe, affordable private rented housing. To help residents secure and maintain tenancies, we offer a range of discretionary financial measures tailored to individual circumstances. These include bond guarantees to cover property damage and rent arrears, rent-in-advance payments to meet landlord requirements, and temporary rent top-ups to make tenancies viable. For vulnerable groups, such as young people without guarantors, we fund commercial guarantor products and are developing specific support arrangements, including a new guarantor agreement for care leavers where we underwrite rent and damages.

Through our Tenancy Relations Officer, we also provide bespoke advice and advocacy for private tenants who are on the receiving end of harassment from their landlord or agent, or are faced with an unlawful eviction. We engage with the landlord on the tenant's behalf, informing them of the prescribed legal routes to eviction and encouraging them to do the right thing, with more formal enforcement levers used for landlords who fail to comply or are negligent in their duties. Our support is wide-ranging, helping to ensure tenancies start on the right footing, are maintained, and end well, as we promptly handle claims made against Council bond guarantees and provide advice in relation to tenancy deposit protection and disputes.

Our Tenant Matching Service

Ms X applied to the Tenant Matching Service, expressing interest in the Wigan area. A local landlord had a newly renovated property near Wigan town centre and were keen to find a suitable tenant—this being the first 'trial' match. Two applicants were shortlisted. While waiting on further details from one, Ms X's information was shared. She had a strong tenancy history, good credit, and was over-occupying a studio flat with her baby. A viewing took place in early January 2025, and both parties were happy to proceed.

All paperwork, including the inventory and bond agreement, was completed, and the landlord received the £100 thank-you payment.

Their feedback:
"As first-time landlords using the Tenant Matching Service, the support from the council made the process clear and straightforward. We wouldn't have found the right tenant at the right time without them."

Through targeted investment in the Private Rented Sector, we improve living conditions and support better outcomes for tenants.

- Access to safe, affordable homes through council-backed schemes.
- Help with deposits, rent in advance, and guarantors.
- Tailored support for vulnerable groups and low-income households.
- Greater security with longer, more stable tenancies.
- Advice and support to maintain tenancies and resolve issues.

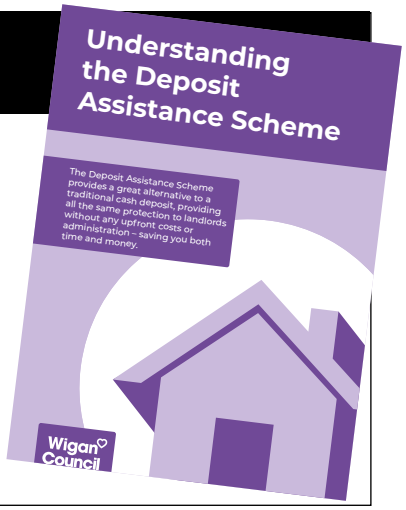
Over the lifetime of this strategy, we want to better understand who lives in the Private Rented Sector, recognising that many homes in this sector, often of lower value, accommodate potentially vulnerable households. By exploring the characteristics, needs, and circumstances of these residents, we will develop tailored support to meet the specific requirements of different groups.

We will place particular emphasis on older people ageing in place within the Private Rented Sector, who may face distinct challenges related to health, mobility, affordability, and housing suitability. Alongside this, we will work closely with landlords and tenants to increase awareness and uptake of available support, including better promotion of Disabled Facilities Grants, which continue to be under-utilised in the sector.

Our Deposit Assistance Scheme at Work

Mr x applied for our Deposit Assistance Scheme as he was street homeless & sometimes sofa surfing. He has a young daughter who he wanted to be in contact with once he had found a home. He applied for the Tenant Matching Service and wanted to be as close to Wigan as possible. He works full time and receives Universal Credit top ups sometimes when his wages are down.

Mr X found a property with a local estate agent and was able to utilise our cashless bond service to secure the property. He found secure quality accommodation near his young daughter.



Supporting People Who May Face Greater Barriers in Accessing or Sustaining Housing

We understand that some people encounter significant barriers in accessing safe, stable, and suitable housing due to complex and often overlapping vulnerabilities. To help, we are delivering a comprehensive and coordinated range of targeted initiatives and strategic partnerships.

These are designed to provide highly personalised accommodation solutions and support services, ensuring that vulnerable households receive the right assistance at the right time to access sustainable housing pathways.

Our Springboard Partnership

A cornerstone of this approach is the Springboard Partnership, which exemplifies our commitment to collaborative working across the public, private, and voluntary sectors. This innovative partnership brings together Riverside, Your Housing Group and Jigsaw to deliver integrated supported housing and tailored support services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of losing their homes. Recently recommissioned for a further five-year period, the Springboard Partnership provides a crucial safety net through a combination of supported accommodation options alongside holistic, person-centred support. This model enables residents to stabilise their living situations, access health and wellbeing services, and receive ongoing assistance to move towards permanent, independent housing solutions. The partnership's flexibility allows it to respond effectively to a diverse range of needs, including those with complex health and social care requirements.

Spotlight on The Homeless Families Leasing Scheme

For families facing homelessness, the Homeless Families Leasing Scheme has offered a vital alternative to costly and often unsuitable temporary accommodation such as bed and breakfasts. This innovative scheme utilised GMCA grant funding, match funded by the Council, to secure a pipeline of affordable, good-quality housing tailored for families. By providing investment to renovate and restore homes, including some long-term, empty properties, to a quality lettable standard, the Council has been able to maximise existing homes while reducing dependency on emergency accommodation. Properties within this scheme will be let at genuinely affordable rates for the length of the lease, ensuring ongoing affordability and providing families with greater stability. Throughout the course of the project, 22 quality, affordable rented homes have been secured on lease, contributing to housing supply and to the regeneration of local neighbourhoods. Further to the success of the initiative, the Council are continuing to engage with the GMCA and other GM districts in relation to potential future schemes aimed at reducing the use of temporary accommodation for local families and increasing the provision of long-term, settled homes.





Family Leasing Scheme Revives Long-Term Empty Home in Hindley

Located in Hindley, a traditional terraced house had been vacant for an extended period before being acquired as part of the Family Leasing Scheme. The property was identified as a suitable candidate for refurbishment as an affordable home.

The scheme invested in renovating and upgrading the property to ensure it met the required standards of safety, quality, and comfort for incoming tenants. Funding was utilised to support necessary repairs and improvements, making the home suitable for leasing at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.

The successful transformation of this property demonstrates the positive impact of the ELA/Greater Manchester Family Leasing Scheme in addressing housing challenges for vulnerable families. By bringing this long-term empty property back into use, the scheme has increased the supply of affordable housing, reduced reliance on costly temporary accommodation, and contributed to neighbourhood regeneration. The refurbishment not only improved the appearance of the area but also provided a stable home for a family, supported by tailored assistance through the family leasing scheme, helping them to sustain their tenancy and improve their quality of life. This example highlights how strategic investment and partnership working can deliver sustainable housing solutions and enhance community wellbeing across Greater Manchester.







A New Foyer

A Foyer provides temporary accommodation for young people aged 16 to 25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, offering a safe and supportive environment alongside access to training and personal development opportunities. These schemes help young residents reconnect with learning, boost employability, improve wellbeing, and develop leadership potential, with staff always on hand to offer tailored support. Your Housing Group (YHG) currently operates four Foyers across the North West and is now spearheading the development of a new, purpose-built Foyer in Wigan to replace the longstanding Coops Foyer. Over the past 20 years, the existing Wigan Foyer has supported more than 500 young people, and the new facility will build on this legacy, providing 38 self-contained one-bedroom apartments designed to support the transition to independent living. Alongside high-quality accommodation, the new Foyer will include on-site educational and training spaces, employment support, and communal social areas, all aimed at empowering young people to achieve long-term independence and social inclusion. Developed in partnership with Wigan Council and supported by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, this investment reflects a shared commitment to delivering sector-leading services and holistic support for young people across the borough.

Supporting Our Care Leavers

We have demonstrated a consistent track record of supporting care leavers as they transition into independent adulthood—a group that is growing in number and whose needs demand particular attention. As care leavers are recognised as having a protected characteristic under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the council is committed to offering ongoing support throughout their lives.

We provide significant financial and practical support to care leavers, recognising that early stability is critical to their long-term success. This includes a £3,000 setting-up allowance to help with essential household items, assistance with rental deposits, and the recent tailored guarantor agreement, which enables us to cover the rent and any property damages on behalf of the young person, acting in the role of rent guarantor. The agreement is now being used to help our care leavers access student accommodation/house shares and standard PRS tenancies.

Furthermore, care leavers benefit from council tax exemptions until the age of 25, removing a potential financial barrier. These supports are designed to provide care leavers with a strong foundation for independent living, promoting positive outcomes in education, employment, health, and wellbeing.



Care Leaver Guarantor Scheme in Action

A young person was referred to the Deposit Assistance Scheme for help securing accommodation at university. As a guarantor was required and many care leavers lack someone who meets the financial criteria, the council developed a new Guarantor Agreement in partnership with housing, children's services, and legal teams. The accommodation provider reviewed and accepted the agreement, enabling the council to act as guarantor. Compliance documents such as safety certificates and tenancy agreements were obtained, and the agreement was signed by all parties. This ensured the young person could move into university halls and start their course without facing housing barriers.

Creating Housing Pathways Through Targeted Investment

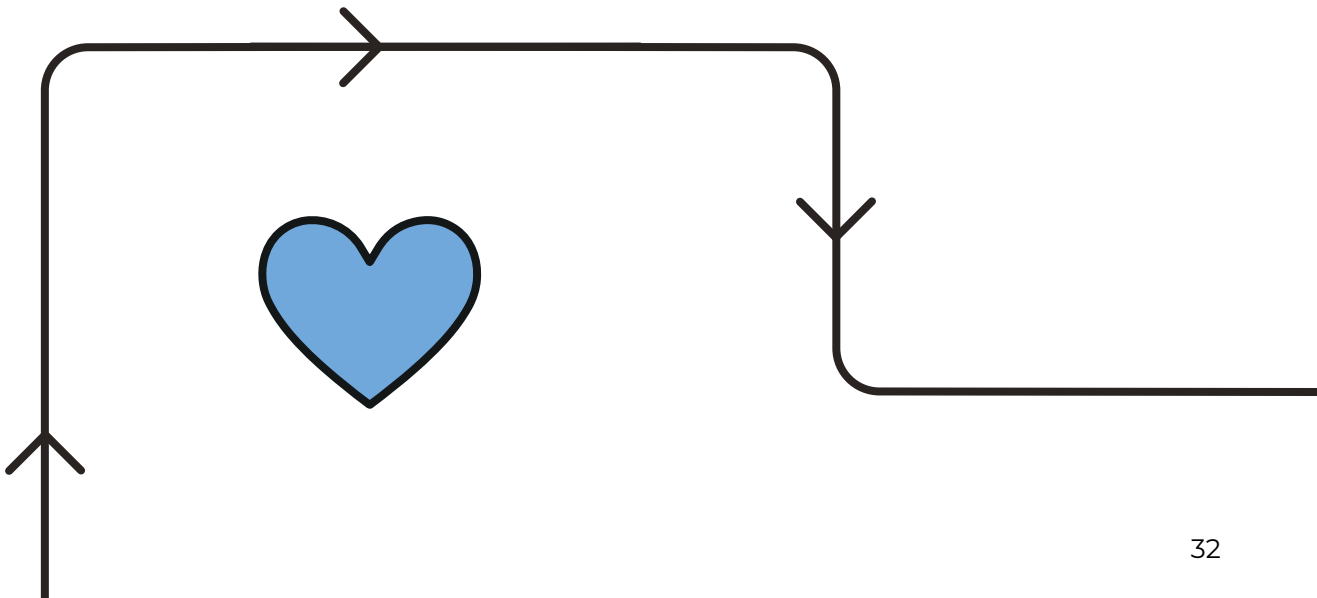
This section of our strategy has demonstrated that meeting housing need isn't just about building more homes—it's about building the right homes, creating clear pathways to access them, and making better use of the homes we already have. In a borough with competing investment pressures, this broader approach—combining new delivery with smarter use of existing homes—can often offer more targeted and cost-effective solutions. For instance, extending a foster family's home may be cheaper than building a new one, while still providing space and stability. Bringing long-term empty homes back into use through the Ethical Lettings Agency can also boost affordable supply more quickly and affordably than new development. These tailored interventions meet individual needs, strengthen communities, and maximise impact. To support this work, we recognise the need for dedicated funding and will explore the opportunity to develop a ringfenced Housing Investment Fund to provide flexible, high-impact resources alongside new housing delivery.

When securing affordable housing through Section 106 agreements, we will consider a blended approach that combines on-site provision with the collection of commuted sums. This flexible method allows the council to deliver affordable homes directly on new developments while also capturing financial contributions when on-site delivery is not the most effective way to meet local needs. On-site provision will remain our preferred and default approach, but in cases where site constraints, location, or housing mix make it less appropriate, accepting a commuted sum—either in part or in full—may be more beneficial.

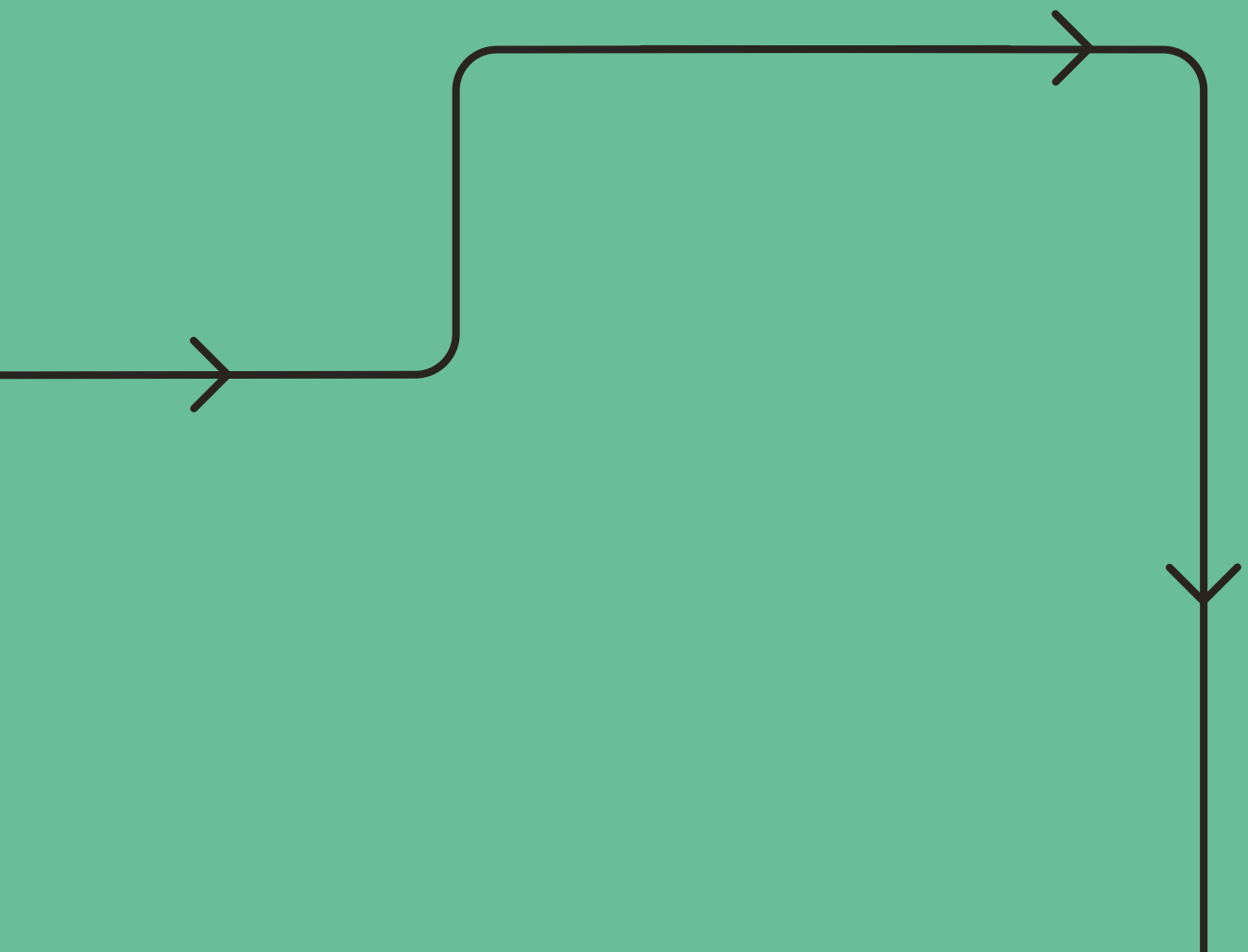
Throughout the lifetime of this strategy, we will explore how such a fund could be established and utilised to support and enhance our broader housing ambitions.

We could apply this fund to a range of wider initiatives, such as:

- Funding social housing rather than affordable housing.
- Supporting specialist affordable housing.
- Bringing empty homes back into use for affordable housing.
- Supporting Community Land Trust affordable housing schemes.
- Purchasing land to enable the development of affordable housing.
- Additional funding for the equity loan homeownership product and Rent to Purchase scheme.
- Creating adaptions or extensions to properties for disabled people to stay in their own homes.
- Creating Tenant Incentive Schemes for downsizing in social housing.
- Providing a support service for children coming out of care to sustain a tenancy.
- Exploring ways to adapt, extend, convert, or redevelop existing affordable homes to better meet diverse housing needs, including creating larger or smaller units, specialist accommodation, and rightsizing options for older households.



Generational Unity — Housing That Supports Life Journeys



Everyone in our borough should have the opportunity to live independently, safely, and with dignity in a home that meets their needs. We recognise that for people with additional needs—including older residents, disabled people, those with mental health conditions, care leavers, and survivors of domestic abuse—a suitable and secure home is the foundation for living well. Across the country, adult social care and supported housing face growing pressures: an ageing population, increasingly complex needs, stretched public finances, and homes that often fall short in terms of accessibility and flexibility. In Wigan, we are responding to these national and local challenges with ambition and collaboration. We are taking bold steps to expand housing choice, promote independence, and better integrate housing into our wider health and care system. Living independently doesn't mean living without support—it means having control, stability, and access to the right kind of home, in the right place, at the right time. That's why we are working with partners to provide a broader range of high-quality, affordable, and accessible homes—supported where necessary by flexible services that enable people to remain part of their communities and avoid institutional settings wherever possible.

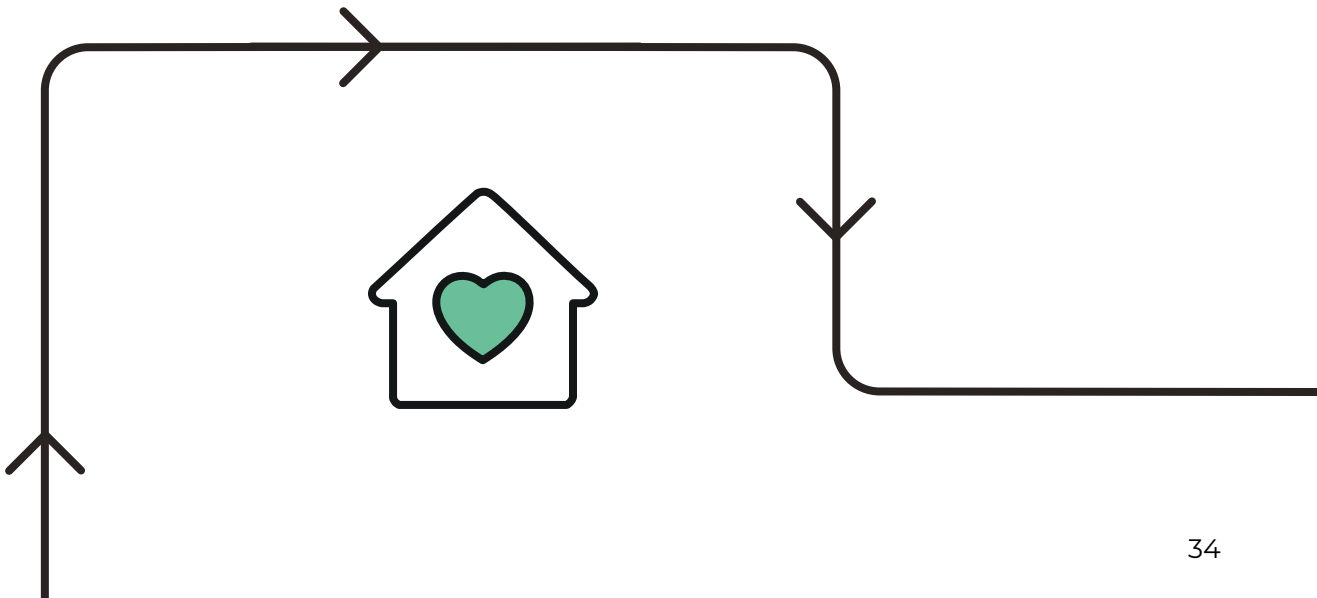
Our evidence tells us...

The Wigan borough faces a major shortage of specialist housing for older people and those with care needs. For example, Extra Care housing currently has 401 units, but needs are expected to grow from 1,419 units in 2023 to nearly 1,930 by 2041. Specialist older persons' housing also falls far short, with only 2,291 homes available compared to a need of over 6,300 now, rising to 8,575 by 2041.

Many residents have complex health needs: thousands live with dementia, mobility issues, learning disabilities, or mental health challenges—and all are expected to rise significantly by 2041. Nearly 40% of people aged 85+ need help to live independently, and demand for residential care beds will outstrip current supply within two decades.

Therefore, Wigan urgently needs more accessible, adaptable, and supported housing options—such as:

- **Extra Care housing:** self-contained homes with 24-hour care and support on site, designed to help older people live independently.
- **Specialist older persons' housing:** age-appropriate homes (e.g. sheltered or retirement housing) offering security, community, and varying levels of support.
- **Integrated housing with care and support:** homes designed for people of all ages with physical, learning, or mental health needs, combining housing, personal care, and health services.



Ensuring the Market Delivers for Wigan

We have already taken proactive steps to shape the supported and specialist housing market through our established Supported and Specialist Housing Prospectus, which has provided clear guidance on local needs and priorities for several years. Its success lies in setting out a clear, evidence-based picture of what is required—identifying gaps in provision, articulating the types of housing needed, and providing a strategic framework to support collaborative development. As a result, partners have responded with increased confidence, and several new schemes have been brought forward that align with the council's priorities around independent living, quality, and inclusion.

To build on this success, **a refreshed prospectus will introduce a new, user-friendly dashboard that will strengthen market intelligence and support even more informed decision-making**. This innovative tool is designed to help housing associations and developers better understand the current and projected supply and demand for supported and specialist accommodation across the borough. It will offer clear, accessible, and regularly updated data, helping partners identify opportunities for new provision and tailor developments to meet specific local needs.

The introduction of the dashboard marks an important next step in our approach—moving from setting the vision and identifying the need, to providing real-time insight that helps deliver the right homes in the right places.

As well as helping providers understand what we need, we recognise that more must be done to ensure residents have access to timely, clear, and accessible information and advice to help them take greater control over their own health and care. Empowering individuals with the knowledge and tools to explore preventative options is essential to reducing future demand on formal services and supporting people to live well at home for longer. We will make this a priority—ensuring people are informed, confident, and supported to make choices that promote independence, resilience, and better health outcomes.

Supporting Ageing Residents to Live Well at Home

The majority of older residents in our borough tell us they want to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, where they feel secure, connected, and independent. To make this aspiration a reality, we must ensure existing homes are safe, warm, and suitable for changing needs as people age.

A key part of this is the effective use of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), alongside early intervention and timely home adaptations such as stairlifts, ramps, accessible bathrooms, and handrails. These measures help prevent falls, maintain independence, and reduce the likelihood of avoidable hospital admissions.

We will also continue to promote grants and assistance for energy efficiency and heating upgrades, supporting warm homes and reducing fuel poverty. However, we recognise there is a gap in support for essential home repairs where poor property conditions can put residents at risk of deteriorating health. Issues such as damp and mould, unsafe electrics, damaged roofing, windows and doors, and inefficient heating systems all contribute to poorer outcomes and reduce quality of life.

To address this, we plan to develop a new Housing Assistance Policy and tailored offer for older homeowners at risk of poor health linked to the condition of their property. This will include access to low-cost loans to fund essential repairs and improvements, ensuring homes are not only accessible but also safe, dry, and energy efficient.

By strengthening this support, our aim is to:

- Improve health outcomes and help residents stay well at home.
- Prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and reduce lengths of stay by ensuring homes are safe and suitable for discharge.
- Reduce falls and accidents in the home through timely modifications.
- Promote wellbeing and independence for older people across the borough.
- This approach reflects our commitment to supporting ageing in place, recognising that investing in existing homes is as important as building new ones for meeting the needs of an ageing population.

Shared Lives – Transforming Supported Living in Wigan

Our Shared Lives scheme has seen significant growth, providing adults with disabilities, older people, and those facing illness or social isolation the chance to live within supportive family environments. This person-centred model enables individuals to achieve personal goals such as attending college, gaining travel skills, and participating in community life.

Shared Lives carers, carefully matched to those they support, offer long-term respite and day care options, fostering meaningful, lasting relationships. This approach empowers individuals to live fulfilling lives within their local communities, promoting independence and social inclusion.

Our expansion of Shared Lives aligns with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's regional strategy, which aims for 15% of all social care for people with learning disabilities to be delivered through Shared Lives placements. This shift reflects a broader commitment to personalised, community-based care that values integration and choice over traditional institutional settings.





Back to the Future

Our adult social care services are built on a person-centred, strengths-based approach that prioritises independence, safety, and well-being. Moving away from traditional, deficit-focused models, the council emphasises what individuals can do and the assets within their communities, enabling more personalised and effective support. Building on the success of The Deal—which reshaped care through trust, collaboration, and community empowerment—Wigan has launched the "Back to the Future" transformation programme to further enhance outcomes for adult social care users. This programme focuses on maximising independence, reducing demand on services, and making the best use of available resources. Key elements of Wigan's asset-based approach include:

- Having meaningful conversations with residents that recognise their strengths, talents, and existing support networks.
- Connecting people to local community organisations and resources to promote self-reliance.
- Fostering a compassionate, value-driven workforce empowered to innovate and respond flexibly to individual needs.
- Emphasising neighbourhood-based working with partners to deliver collaborative, place-based support.

Current progress under the Back to the Future programme includes strengthened integrated care pathways between adult social care and NHS partners, ensuring more seamless and coordinated support for residents. Additionally, new and innovative models of care have been launched, focusing on prevention and early intervention to reduce demand on acute services and promote community-based support.

Looking ahead, the Back to the Future programme will:

- Expand community-based services that are accessible, responsive, and rooted in local needs.
- Enhance digital integration to streamline service delivery, improve communication, and enable remote care options.
- Strengthen partnerships across health, housing, and voluntary sectors to build a cohesive and supportive network for residents.

Our Neighbourhood-Based Homecare Model

Wigan Council has developed a forward-thinking, ethical homecare model that keeps residents living independently in their own homes by delivering care within local neighbourhoods. Partnering with select ethical providers, carers build strong, lasting relationships and gain deep community insight, enabling more personalised and consistent support.

By reducing travel time, carers spend more time providing hands-on care, improving quality and responsiveness. Residents benefit from staying connected and safe in familiar surroundings. All providers pay at least the Real Living Wage and invest in staff training, ensuring a skilled workforce and fair pay. A fixed fee means equal costs for all, promoting transparency and equity.

This model works hand-in-hand with Wigan's Integrated Community Nursing and Therapy teams, blending health and social care seamlessly. Together, they reduce hospital admissions and reliance on residential care by delivering coordinated, community-based support where people need it most.

Belongings

Family & Friends Information

PEER SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE LOTS OF BELONGINGS

Wigan Safeguarding Adults Board

Taking a sensitive approach to hoarding

Hoarding is a complex, anxiety-driven behaviour often rooted in trauma or emotional distress. We take a person-centred approach, prioritising trust-building and psychological readiness before any decluttering begins. Rather than pursuing quick fixes, the focus is on compassionate, long-term engagement.

Multi-agency collaboration is essential, particularly in high-risk cases, while early intervention is promoted even in moderate situations. To support this, the council offers specialist hoarding awareness training and has developed a Hoarding Toolkit to ensure consistent, empathetic responses across services. Enforced clear-outs are strongly discouraged.

We know that more work is needed with the private rented sector. Many tenants at risk of eviction due to hoarding live in privately rented homes, where landlords may lack the knowledge or tools to respond constructively. The council will therefore extend support to private landlords by:

- Rolling out hoarding awareness training and sharing the Hoarding Toolkit.
- Encouraging empathy, flexibility, and partnership working with tenants and local services.
- Promoting alternatives to eviction, with a focus on sustaining tenancies and improving outcomes for both tenants and landlords.

Work with Housing Associations

A major barrier to people moving on from supported housing is the absence of clear, efficient move-on pathways. To address this, **we will strengthen our collaboration with housing associations to meet the urgent demand for move-on accommodation.** By strengthening with care-focused housing associations and better aligning resources across adult social care and housing services, we aim to develop sustainable solutions that support residents' independence while easing pressure on supported housing.

Potential approaches include:

- Ongoing market engagement between commissioning services and housing associations to align affordable housing delivery with the needs of specialist client groups.
- Pre-allocating new homes during the planning stage to ensure they include bespoke adaptations tailored to individual needs, particularly for children and families.
- Leveraging developer contributions to fund affordable housing specifically designed for people with disabilities or health needs.
- Partnering to jointly develop specialist schemes or offering long leases on council-owned buildings to reduce financial risks for housing associations.
- Providing financial incentives, such as grants or low-interest loans, to encourage the development of specialist housing.
- Collaborating on wider housing challenges, including optimising the use of homes where appropriate.

Inclusive Housing for Older People and Those with Disabilities

Wigan borough has the fastest ageing population in Greater Manchester, with the number of people aged 85 and over expected to grow by 90% by 2040. Most older people won't need specialist accommodation and prefer to stay in their own homes. This is positive, as living at home supports independence, comfort, and stronger community connections—reflecting what many people truly want. At the same time, the number of households including someone with a mental health condition or physical disability is also rising. Recognising these shifts, creating opportunities and providing support for people to live independently at home is a key focus.

Policy H2 of the draft Local Plan requires developers to demonstrate how their housing schemes address the needs of older people and individuals with disabilities. For new residential developments of 20 or more homes, at least 4% of units must be wheelchair accessible, meeting the highest standards of Part M4(3) of the Building Regulations—unless site conditions or viability make this impractical.

Housing designed for older adults and people with disabilities will only be supported when it aligns with other planning policies and delivers:

- Sustainable locations with excellent access to public transport, local services, and amenities.
- Designs that promote ease of movement both on foot and using mobility aids.
- Convenient parking and drop-off points close to building entrances wherever possible.
- Thoughtfully designed outdoor spaces featuring accessible seating, step-free pathways, and gentle gradients tailored to wheelchair users and those with visual or mobility impairments.



The Ageing in Place Pathfinder Programme

The Ageing in Place Pathfinder Programme is a partnership between Wigan Council and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, focused on improving the lives of older residents in the South Wigan and North Ashton Neighbourhood (SWAN). The programme centres on empowering residents to lead positive change in their communities. To understand the needs of isolated older adults, the programme has used community events, "talk and walk" sessions with local health groups, and creative workshops. These efforts have built a strong local partnership of residents and stakeholders working together to shape the neighbourhood's future.

Several key findings have emerged from these conversations:

- Better communication and information sharing within the community.
- Improving digital skills and creating roles like community reporters to keep everyone informed.
- Enhancing outdoor spaces by addressing problems with pavements, seating, and rest areas.
- Increasing social participation through local history celebrations and welcoming communal 'warm hubs'.

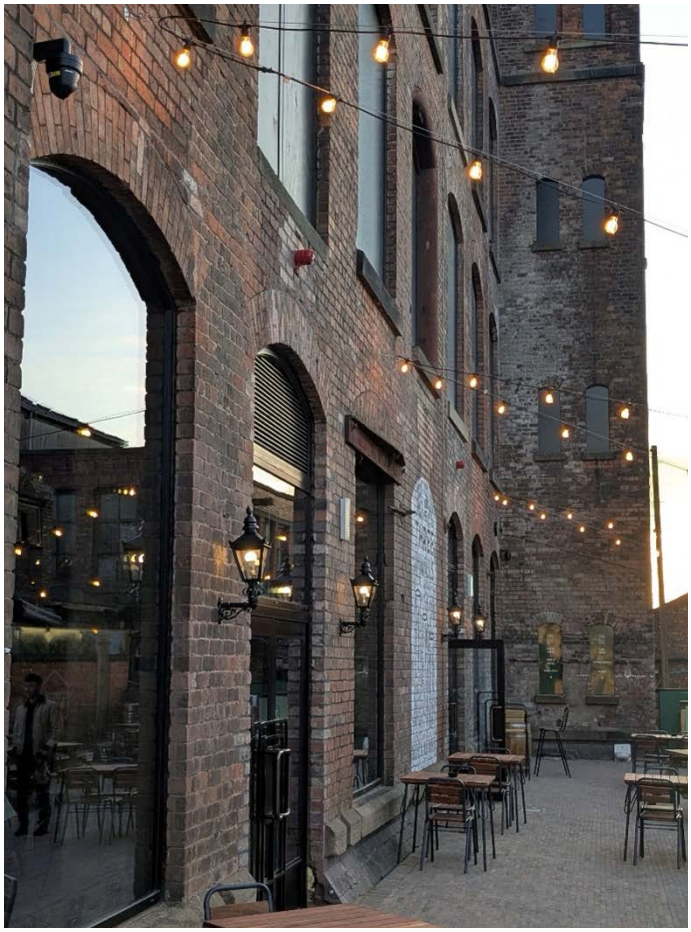
Looking ahead, the Pathfinder is contributing to wider plans to make Wigan a borough where people can grow older with dignity, independence, and purpose. The approach is informing:

- Sustained and scaled resident-led models for neighbourhood action, with lessons from SWAN shaping similar work across Greater Manchester.
- Creative and cultural health initiatives to reduce isolation and improve wellbeing, including co-designed activities with local artists and practitioners.
- Innovative pilot projects for older carers, supporting those aged 50+ who play vital roles in family and community life.
- Investment in age-friendly infrastructure, ensuring homes, public spaces and services better support residents as they age.

Through this work, we are not only responding to demographic changes but also embedding a proactive, preventative model of support into neighbourhood design, service delivery, and house planning.







Intergenerational Living at the Heart of Wigan's Cotton Works Redevelopment

The Cotton Works is a major 16-acre urban regeneration project in Wigan, transforming one of the North West's largest brownfield sites into a vibrant mixed-use neighbourhood. It features residential, commercial, and leisure spaces, including a food hall, event venues, and amenities like a gym and crèche.

A key focus is on intergenerational living, with 121 later living residences designed specifically for older adults. These homes promote community engagement alongside over 950 apartments for rent and sale, with plans also exploring specialist housing for people with learning disabilities.

Extra Care in the Wigan Borough

Most people want to remain living in their own home, with their own front door, close to family, friends, and the communities they know. Supporting this is a key priority for Wigan Council—it reflects what older residents say they want and helps promote independence, wellbeing and dignity.

However, with such a rapidly ageing population, we also recognise that some people will need specialist housing at certain points in their lives—particularly those with more complex health or care needs. Ensuring the right types of housing are available, in the right locations, and integrated with support services is essential to helping people age well. That means planning now for a wider range of high-quality, accessible, and affordable housing options tailored to later life.

Extra Care is designed to build and preserve an individual's independence, health, and wellbeing. It is preventative in nature, central to our vision on community living—connecting people to the people, places, and activities they love. Extra Care is flexible and responsive to a wide range of needs, providing inclusive care and accommodation.

Since 2018, we have significantly expanded our award-winning Extra Care provision, increasing capacity by 180%. This includes three council-owned schemes developed since the last housing strategy:

- Eldervale in Sandalwood Drive, Wigan, completed in late 2022, offers 48 one-bedroom apartments, 3 two-bedroom apartments, and 18 bungalows. It features communal lounges, landscaped gardens, and modern amenities, with on-site care tailored to individual needs.
- Meadow View in Shevington, opened in March 2025, comprises 32 accessible, single-floor apartments for people aged 55 and over. The scheme fosters community through shared spaces alongside private homes.
- Wharfdale in Leigh, completed in January 2023, includes 56 Extra Care apartments designed to support older residents with a range of care needs. Communal areas encourage social interaction, while on-site care services promote independence.

As Extra Care options have increased, only those with the most complex health and specialist needs now require care home placements. With the number of people over 65 living with dementia expected to increase by 80% by 2030, we will boost specialist dementia care within the borough by further diversifying Extra Care services to include supporting people with dementia and other memory-related conditions and offering more flexible Extra Care options for a wider range of ages and needs.

We are also developing new respite care models, including bookable breaks for family carers, available in care homes and Extra Care settings.









Innovating Dementia Care: The Rowans Specialist Nursing Facility

The Rowans is a new 66-bed specialist nursing facility in Wigan focused on dementia care for mainly over-65 residents, including those with complex or dual diagnoses.

It stands out for its advanced use of technology to improve care and resident wellbeing. This includes electronic care records for personalised support, sensor-based monitoring to detect falls or wandering, assistive devices like memory aids and GPS trackers, and telehealth for remote medical consultations.

The Rowans reflects Wigan's modern, person-centred approach to dementia care, combining specialist support with innovative digital tools to enhance quality of life and care outcomes.

Maximising the Use of Technology

Effective use of technology is essential to improving adult social care by enhancing service quality, increasing accessibility, and empowering residents to live independently for longer. Our strategy focuses on leveraging innovative tools and robust infrastructure to deliver smarter, more responsive care. Central to this is the Care Home Support and Development Framework, which ensures new homes with care like Meadow View are equipped with the latest technical standards— covering strong wireless connectivity, integrated Careline and staff communication systems, individual safety alarms, and advanced monitoring sensors—to support resident safety and wellbeing.

Additionally, **we are leading the way with co-developed Generative AI solutions under our "Progress with Unity" plan.** This includes an AI tool that helps social workers capture and summarise assessments efficiently, and an AI chatbot providing instant responses to adult social care queries, improving both staff productivity and resident experience. By combining infrastructure excellence with cutting-edge AI, we can empower residents with timely, personalised information and promote preventative care— key to reducing future demand on formal services and supporting healthier, more independent communities.

Driving Up Standards in Exempt Accommodation

Exempt accommodation refers to supported housing where providers can access higher rates of housing benefit due to the additional support offered to vulnerable residents. While many providers in the borough offer high-quality support, others fall short— delivering poor outcomes, straining local services, and undermining community trust.

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 gives council's new powers to tackle these issues. **We will use these powers to strengthen oversight, drive up standards, and protect residents.** This includes the right to carry out inspections— both scheduled and unannounced— of exempt accommodation to assess the quality of housing, support provided, and overall resident experience.

Our approach will combine enforcement with support:

- Spot checks and inspections will be used to monitor compliance and hold providers accountable.
- A robust quality assurance framework will assess service quality, outcomes, and value for money.
- A Supported Housing Provider Charter will set clear expectations and minimum standards.
- A trusted provider list will be created, promoting reputable organisations that meet our standards and helping commissioners, landlords, and funders make informed choices.

Where strong providers are identified, we will help them expand—offering planning advice, access to capital funding, and practical support to grow provision in line with local need. Our goal is clear: ensure all exempt accommodation in the Wigan borough delivers safe, well-managed, and high-quality housing that genuinely supports residents to live healthier, more independent lives.

Our Ongoing Commitment to Care Leavers

We have long recognised our responsibility as a corporate parent and have consistently prioritised the needs of care leavers, not just as a statutory duty but as a matter of values and principle. For many years, we have taken a proactive, ambitious approach to supporting care-experienced young people— placing their wellbeing, independence, and aspirations at the heart of service delivery.

The council has invested in creating a high-quality, trusted, and widely respected service that continues to evolve with the needs of young people. From personalised support through dedicated advisers and pathway planning, to the welcoming and practical Care Leaver Hub, we have built a strong, inclusive model.

We ensure care leavers have a strong voice, with forums like "Connected Families" shaping future improvements. And the work doesn't stop at 18, **we are committed to maintaining positive connections into adulthood, recognising that young people may need flexible and tailored support as they grow and change.**

A stable, safe home is one of the most important foundations for independence and resilience. We provide a range of housing-related support to ensure every care leaver has the right home and pathway into adulthood, including:

- Highest priority access to Council-owned housing, so that young people leaving care can move quickly into secure, good-quality accommodation.
- Support with deposits, upfront rent, and guarantors for those moving into the private rented sector.
- Help with student housing costs, ensuring care leavers can pursue education without the barrier of insecure housing.
- Exploring new models of housing such as a pilot HMO/house-share scheme, offering the option for young people who want to live together to benefit from peer support, community, and inclusion.

Domestic Abuse and Housing – Our Commitment

Domestic abuse has a devastating and far-reaching impact on individuals, families, and communities. It can affect people of all ages, genders, and backgrounds, undermining their safety, wellbeing, and ability to live independently. For many, access to safe and secure housing is a critical factor in escaping abuse and beginning to rebuild their lives. Housing plays a vital role in both the prevention of domestic abuse and the recovery process. That is why we are working in partnership to provide timely, compassionate, and effective support for those affected—ensuring that no one is forced to remain in, or return to, an unsafe situation due to a lack of suitable housing options.

Through a comprehensive transformation programme, we have redesigned our domestic abuse accommodation and support model, underpinned by recurrent funding and a long-term commitment to safe housing. This includes a mix of refuge and dispersed accommodation, alongside target hardening and sanctuary schemes to help survivors remain safely in their homes where appropriate. A review of safe accommodation is underway to inform future planning and ensure provision meets demand, including bridging accommodation and solutions for homeowners who may otherwise be unable to leave abusive situations.

A skilled team of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), including a specialist Young Person's Domestic Violence Advisor, provides tailored support for high-risk cases. Operating within a multi-agency framework, IDVAs take a keyworker approach, focusing on immediate safety, longer-term housing needs, and overall wellbeing.

Looking ahead, we will continue to:

- Strengthen multi-agency coordination and training across services.
- Expand the network of Domestic Abuse Champions and embed good practice.
- Explore innovative housing solutions for groups currently underserved, such as homeowners.
- Maintain and enhance safe accommodation options, informed by ongoing reviews and needs assessments.

The council's refreshed Domestic Abuse Strategy will reflect these priorities, ensuring victims and survivors have access to safe, stable housing and holistic support.

Supporting Those That Are Homeless and Rough Sleeping

A newly refreshed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy prioritises:

- Understanding homelessness and playing your part
- Increasing access to affordable, safe secure accommodation
- Improving outcomes, improving lives

The strategy takes a unique approach, recognising that **homelessness is everyone's challenge, and everyone can play a role in its solution**. It recognises that homelessness is not a permanent condition, for many it is a temporary situation caused by a specific crisis or hardship. With the right support, understanding, and resources, many people can transition out of homelessness and regain stable housing. If people know how they can help and what needs to happen, then they are better equipped to make choices about how they provide support. The strategy calls upon everyone in our borough to play their part.

It prioritises the need for more secure, good-quality, and affordable housing for people on low incomes. This means building more homes and ensuring private rentals offer the stability needed to prevent and move on from homelessness. But housing alone is not enough. **Many people facing homelessness also experience complex challenges—such as health, financial, or social issues—so tackling homelessness requires a joined-up approach that addresses these wider needs as well as accommodation.**



Building Trust, Changing Lives: Leon's Path Out of Rough Sleeping

Leon was a long-term rough sleeper with a history of failed accommodation due to mental health challenges, particularly anxiety and low trust, which made shared housing unsuitable. The Rough Sleeper Support Service (RSSS) worked intensively with him over several months, using a person-centred approach to build trust and improve his self-esteem, offering practical support like access to showers and haircuts.

Through persistent advocacy, the team secured a self-contained flat in Wigan that met Leon's need for privacy. Although initially hesitant, staff introduced him gradually to the property and local area until he felt comfortable accepting the offer.

RSSS coordinated with partner agencies to support his transition and helped him engage with treatment services. Leon is now in stable housing with ongoing support and no longer at risk of rough sleeping.



Our partnership with The Brick remains central to delivering supported accommodation and tailored support for residents across our borough. As a growing and evolving organisation, The Brick provides a diverse range of supported housing options alongside Independent Living Mentor support, enabling individuals to develop the skills and resilience needed for independent living. Working in collaboration with other voluntary sector partners, they ensure that support is holistic and responsive to individual needs. By continuing to strengthen this partnership, we are expanding the capacity and quality of provision to better meet housing and support needs across the borough.

We know that effective homelessness support must be responsive to the diverse and complex needs of individuals experiencing rough sleeping and housing insecurity. To improve outcomes, alongside those set out in the refreshed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, we will focus on three areas for further research and action:

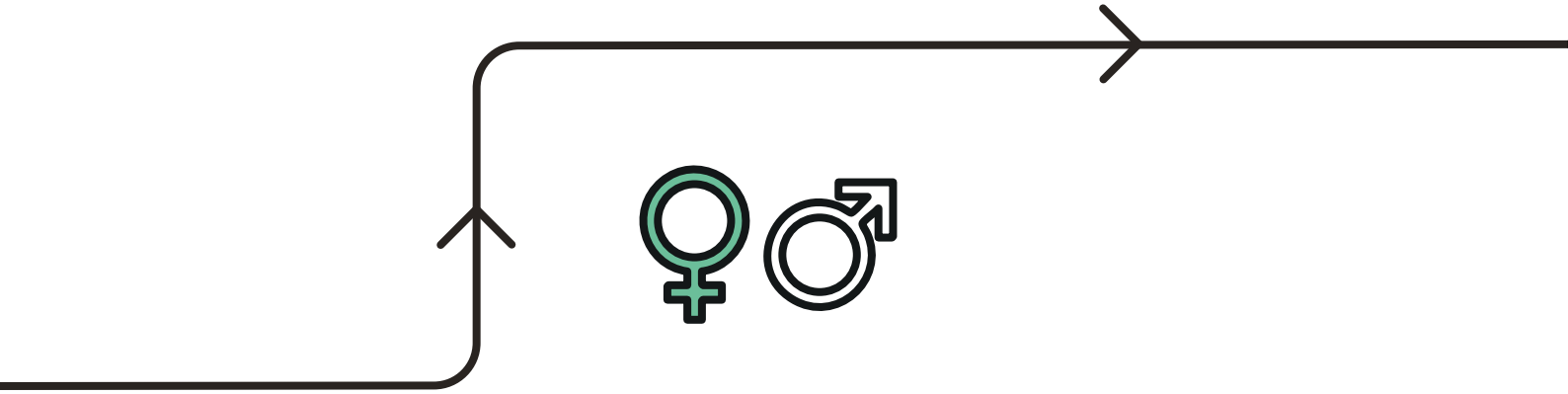
Understanding Refusal of Accommodation Offers - Some rough sleepers may refuse accommodation due to a variety of personal circumstances or concerns about suitability. It is vital to understand these reasons in depth to design support services that truly meet their needs and encourage engagement. Through research and direct consultation, we will identify barriers and preferences to shape more effective, person-centred housing options.

Supporting tenants with pets - Many individuals experiencing homelessness have companion animals, which can be a significant factor in their housing decisions. We will explore expanding the use of pet fostering services, providing temporary care for pets while their owners access accommodation. Under the Renters Reform Act, landlords will not be able to unreasonably refuse tenants with pets. Alongside this new requirement, we will:

- Work with landlords to raise awareness of the benefits of accepting tenants with pets.
- Develop incentives and practical guidance to encourage pet-friendly rental opportunities.
- Strengthen enforcement and monitoring to ensure that tenants' rights are upheld and that pet ownership is not used as a barrier to rehousing.

Developing Gender-Informed Homelessness Services - Men and women often experience homelessness in very different ways, yet current provision in Wigan borough does not fully reflect these gender-specific needs. We are committed to addressing this gap by researching good practice from other areas that have successfully developed gender-responsive homelessness services. This work will help us design future provision that is equitable, safe, and sensitive to the diverse experiences of all people facing homelessness.

To strengthen our understanding, we are now participating in the National Yearly Women's Rough Sleeper Census, recognising that female rough sleepers are often underrepresented in data and service planning. This insight will be key to shaping services that meet the needs of women more effectively and ensure no one is left behind.



Vivian's Story: Trauma-Informed Support Leads to Lasting Housing Stability

Vivian engaged with the Rough Sleeper Support Service (RSSS) while sleeping rough with her partner. Staff quickly identified concerns around coercive control in the relationship but faced challenges as both insisted on being accommodated together. Despite safeguarding risks and limited options, the team worked hard to engage both individuals and tailor support accordingly.

A key breakthrough came when the team provided Vivian with a mobile phone, enabling better communication and independence. When a bed space in ABEN became available, Vivian was initially reluctant to accept it without her partner. The RSSS successfully secured him a simultaneous placement at Queens Hall to reduce disruption and support engagement.

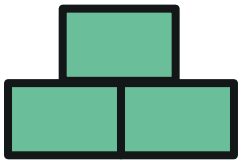
Using trauma-informed approaches, the team encouraged both to take separate accommodation offers. This reduced the risk of further rough sleeping and allowed more effective safeguarding work with Vivian. She has since maintained stability in her placement, built trust with staff, and avoided previous patterns of breakdown. Her partner has also moved into longer-term accommodation.

Gypsy, Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople Sites

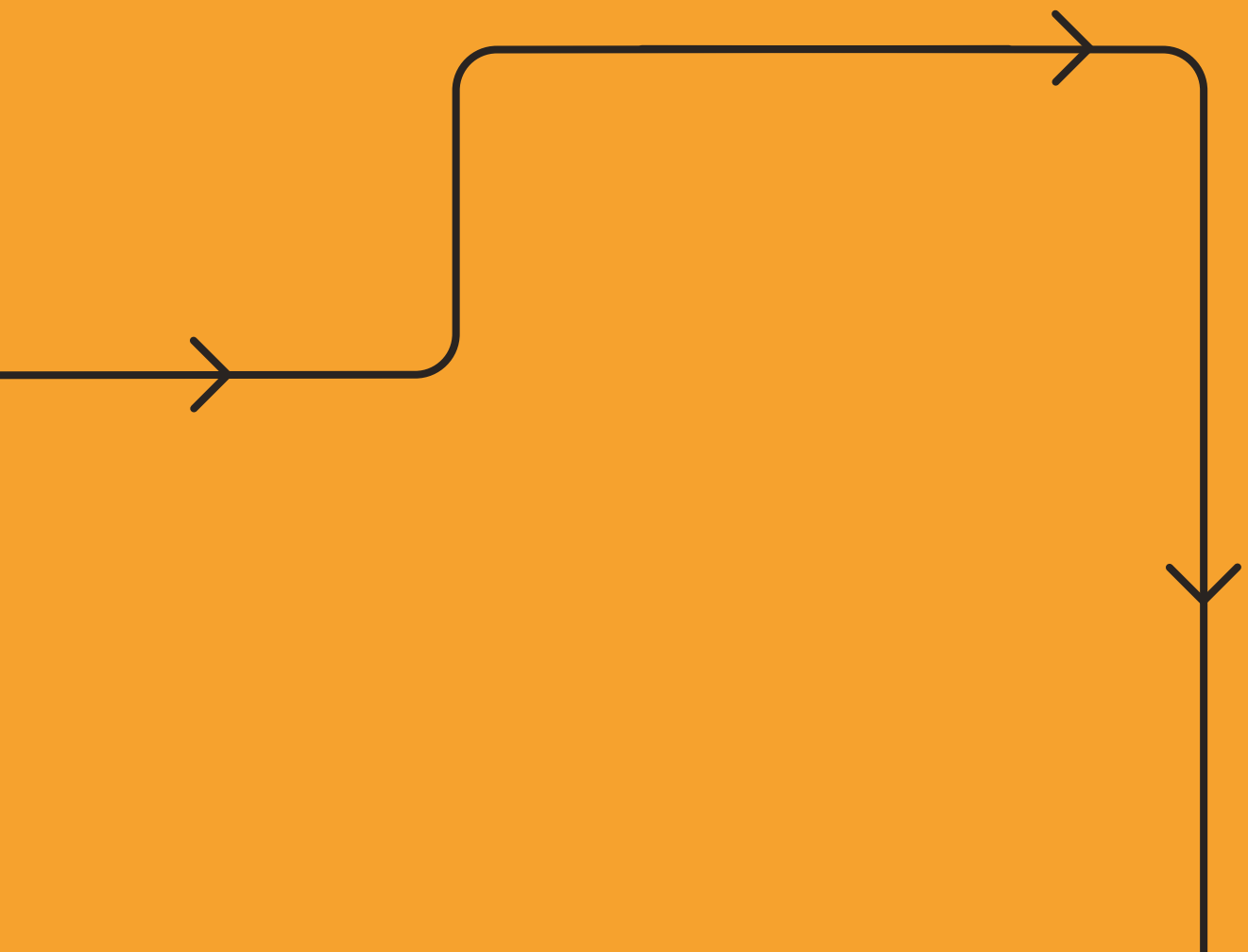
We are committed to safeguarding existing Gypsy, Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople sites while meeting identified future needs. The 2024 Greater Manchester assessment highlighted the need for 18 additional pitches, which will be addressed by extending the Little Lane site in Pemberton. This expansion will provide approximately 20 pitches through to 2040/41.

All new or expanded sites will be required to meet high standards for access, infrastructure, and amenities, ensuring that development does not negatively impact the surrounding area. For Travelling Showpeople, existing sites are already considered sufficient to meet future requirements.

Alongside physical provision, the Council aims to strengthen relationships with the Gypsy and Traveller community, potentially through the appointment of specialist liaison officers. We are also focused on improving the management and maintenance of our own site at Bickershaw, ensuring facilities are kept to a high standard and occupancy is maximised.



Council Leadership - Excellence as a landlord



Providing high-quality, tenant-focused services is at the heart of our drive to build stronger, fairer communities. Safe, well-managed homes don't just offer shelter—they create the foundations for better health, wellbeing, and opportunity. As part of our commitment to Progress with Unity, we're transforming the way we manage council homes—putting tenants at the centre, raising standards, and working together to deliver services that make a real difference.

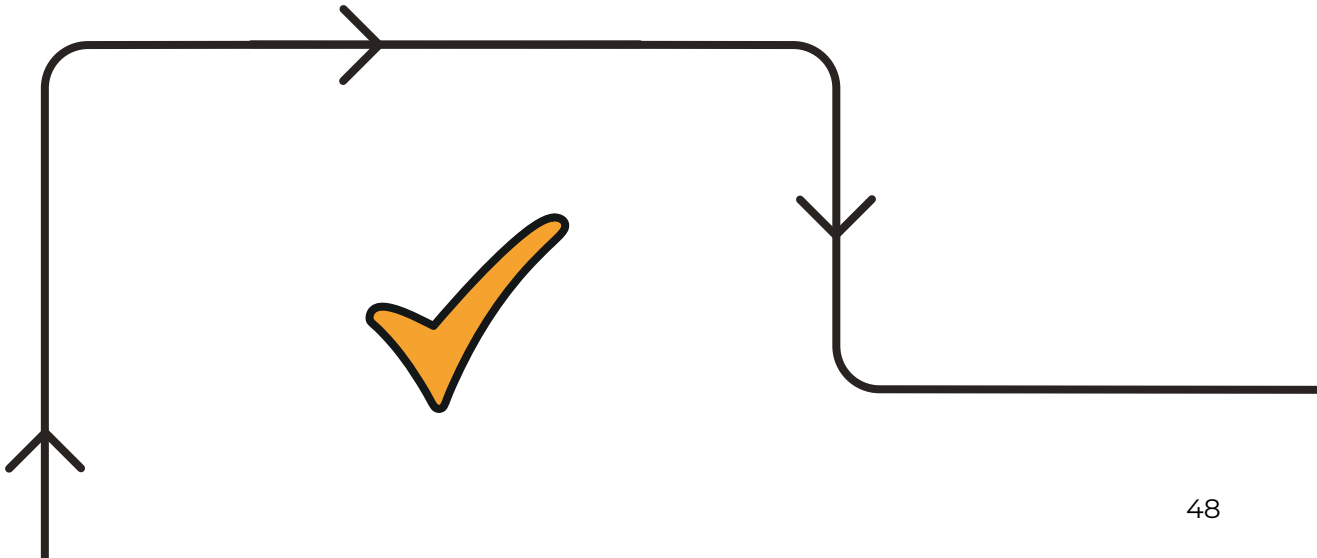
We have already made significant progress. **Housing services are now more integrated, more accountable, and more focused on what matters most to tenants.** Standards have improved, regulatory requirements are being met more consistently, and we've laid strong foundations for future investment in homes and communities.

The council recognises there's still more to do. But with a clear strategic direction and the momentum of the Housing Transformation Programme, we're in a strong position to keep moving forward. This programme is the engine of change—driving better service delivery, meeting regulatory expectations, and securing long-term financial sustainability. At the heart of this is the council's Transitional Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, which sets clear investment priorities based on evidence and need. These include improving the customer experience, meeting housing quality standards, strengthening the repairs service, developing a robust Asset Management Strategy, and enhancing the systems and services that support effective delivery.

Regulatory Context: Raising the Bar for Social Housing

The regulatory landscape for social housing has changed rapidly, placing a much stronger focus on transparency, accountability, and tenant experience. Key developments include:

- **New RSH Inspection Regime:** The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) is introducing a more proactive inspection framework to drive up standards and ensure social landlords are delivering safe, decent homes.
- **Consumer Standards:** Revised standards emphasise tenant safety, quality of housing, and responsiveness to tenant concerns, making sure the voice of residents is at the heart of service delivery.
- **Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs):** Landlords are now required to collect and publish standardised tenant satisfaction data, enabling greater scrutiny and comparison across the sector.
- **Professionalism and Conduct Standards:** Following the **Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023**, new expectations for housing staff emphasise professionalism, competence, and a culture of respect in all interactions with tenants.



Tackling damp and mould in our homes

Wigan Council has introduced a proactive new policy to prevent and tackle condensation, damp, and mould in council homes, following the introduction of Awaab's Law which mandates prompt action on hazardous mould. Approved in December 2024, this policy ensures that high-risk cases are addressed within seven days and focuses on identifying and resolving the root causes of these issues to provide long-term solutions, utilising the 'every visit counts' approach to detect and address problems early during routine visits.

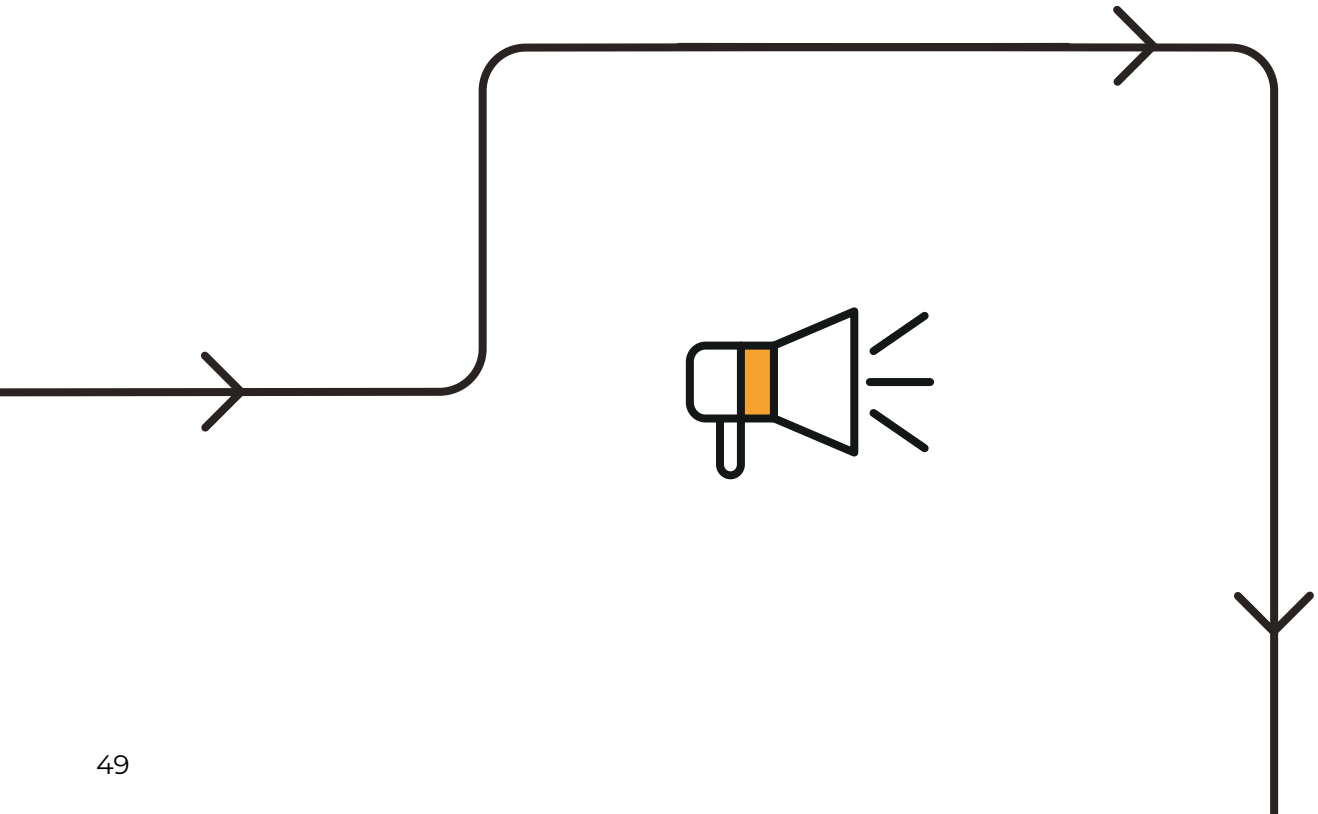
We are maintaining clear communication with tenants throughout the process and have invested in training housing officers to effectively manage damp and mould concerns. Recognising the serious health risks associated with damp and mould, such as respiratory problems and worsening asthma, the council prioritises protecting both the condition of homes and the wellbeing of residents. The council also engages tenants through education and support to help prevent these issues.

Looking ahead, we are exploring innovative approaches, including the use of sensors to monitor humidity levels, and aim to work closely with other services to deliver a comprehensive response to tenant needs. Tenants are encouraged to report any damp or mould problems promptly to ensure swift and effective action.

Putting Tenants First: Our Ongoing Commitment to Voice and Engagement

We put our tenants at the centre of housing decisions. We believe that services are most effective when they are shaped with the people who use them—and that strong, inclusive engagement is essential to building trust, improving outcomes, and strengthening communities.

We've already taken significant steps to embed tenant voice across our housing service. In 2022, we established a dedicated Tenant Voice Team and launched our Tenant Voice and Engagement Strategy, alongside a High-Rise Building Safety Engagement Strategy. Together with tenants, we've created a wide range of opportunities for involvement—from armchair volunteering and local focus groups to strategic panels and youth engagement.







Tenant Readers Panel – Improving Communication Together

We recognised through tenant feedback and staff observations that our letters and written communications were not always clear, accessible, or easy to understand. Working with our Tenant Voice Groups, we created the Tenant Readers Panel – a group of volunteers who review draft letters, flyers, and documents before they are sent out, ensuring the tone, language, and content meet tenants' needs.

Promoted through the volunteer hub, social media, and the Tenant Voice Team, the panel now has 15 active members from diverse backgrounds. Since its launch, they have reviewed 31 documents, leading to clearer letters, fewer tenant queries, and improved satisfaction.

Documents approved by the panel carry the Readers Panel logo, giving tenants confidence that communications have been 'tenant verified.' The success of the panel has also inspired other teams to seek tenant input on training materials and wider activities, demonstrating the growing value of tenant-led insight in shaping housing services.

These changes have helped us to rebuild engagement, amplify tenant voices, and ensure that feedback informs service improvement. We've supported the development of Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs), introduced new volunteer roles through the Readers Panel, and invested in one-to-one support, training, and community events to make engagement more accessible and meaningful. But we know there's more we can do.

We will expand tenant engagement, especially with underrepresented groups. We'll strengthen how tenant feedback shapes our services, increase the impact of engagement, and ensure every tenant can influence decisions about their home and neighbourhood. Building on progress so far, we'll work in true partnership with tenants to co-design services, stay accountable, and deliver a housing service that reflects the diverse voices of our community.





Strengthening Communities Through Development:

In partnership with contractor M&Y Construction, we have been actively supporting local community groups through the development project at the Miles Lane site in Shevington. This collaboration has enabled practical assistance and resources to groups such as Stockley Park, Vicarage Lane Allotments, and Appley Bridge Football Club, helping to strengthen community facilities and promote local engagement. During recent contract procurements, the council secured additional community benefits valued at around £1.5 million. These benefits include investment in local infrastructure, training and employment opportunities, and support for community-led initiatives.

A Strategic Approach to Council Housing Investment

Good-quality, well-maintained homes are a priority for tenants—and that makes them a priority for us. Safe, decent, and energy-efficient homes are not only essential to residents' health and wellbeing, but also fundamental to delivering on our wider social and place-based ambitions.

Our council-owned homes homes face a range of challenges that need to be addressed to ensure they remain safe, comfortable, and suitable for residents now and in the future. Many homes are ageing, some are in poor condition, and some need improvements to meet the Decent Homes Standard. Recognising these pressures, the council has developed an Asset Management Approach to set a clear and long-term way forward for improving homes, meeting regulatory standards, and investing where it will have the greatest impact.

This approach will enhance investment decision-making by integrating asset management with improved data insights, stronger governance, and long-term financial planning guided by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan. It represents a significant shift in how we manage homes, demonstrating a firm commitment to strategic planning, prioritising tenant needs, and laying the groundwork for a high-quality housing offer that serves both current and future residents.

To drive this change, we are focusing on five core areas:

- Setting up one team to manage assets and investments for better planning and delivery.
- Using a neighbourhood-focused approach to guide where we invest, instead of just fixing individual parts.
- Making better use of data by surveying every home over the next three years, supported by new digital tools like mapping and mobile data collection.
- Improving oversight and accountability through the Quality Homes Board and a risk register.
- Strengthening staff skills with a new team structure and more focus on training and compliance.

The Council will develop a full 30-year investment plan, setting out how we plan to invest in our own stock and fund new housing developments. This plan will align with the new Decent Homes Standard, building safety requirements, and carbon reduction targets.

Better procurement will play a key role too—securing value for money while also maximising social value through local supply chains, job creation, and training opportunities. Performance benchmarking through platforms like HouseMark will ensure Wigan stays on track and learns from best practice nationally.



Partnership in Action: Worsley Mesnes Transformation with Keepmoat Homes

Our partnership with Keepmoat Homes at Worsley Mesnes has been a significant step in regenerating the area and creating new opportunities for local residents. Since the opening of new local shops in July 2023, the project has focused not only on delivering quality housing but also on fostering community growth and economic development. Residents have benefited from a range of work and training opportunities provided directly through the development, helping to boost local skills and employability. The partnership has also supported various community projects designed to engage residents and build stronger neighbourhood ties.

This collaborative approach ensures that regeneration at Worsley Mesnes delivers more than just new homes—it creates a vibrant, connected community where residents have access to essential services, employment pathways, and a better quality of life. Wigan Council continues to work closely with Keepmoat to maximise these benefits and explore further initiatives that support local people and the wider community.

A Commitment to Excellent Repairs

While our Asset Management Approach focuses on the long-term quality and sustainability of homes, day-to-day repairs remain one of the most important services the council must get right for tenants. Responsive repairs are critical to maintaining safe, comfortable homes and directly impact tenant satisfaction.

Currently, the repairs service faces challenges, including low satisfaction rates and the need for better communication with residents and improved first-time fix rates. To address this, a new contract framework for repairs will be introduced in 2026, shaped by tenant feedback and designed to bring in new contractors, including greater opportunities for smaller, local providers.

For tenants, this will lead to:

- A more accessible and responsive repairs service that is easier to understand and use.
- Faster and more efficient repair processes, supported by smarter use of technology and better data.
- Greater consistency and quality in the service delivered, whether by in-house teams or contractors.
- A repairs workforce with the right capacity and skills to meet tenant needs, guided by good practice.
- Better communication and engagement, including a repairs offer co-designed with tenants.
- A stronger focus on fairness, inclusion, and accessibility for all tenants.







Building Better Spaces Together: Wigan's Community SOS Initiative

Wigan Council's Community SOS initiative is an innovative scheme designed to connect local community groups with businesses that want to contribute to meaningful projects. Inspired by the BBC's 'DIY SOS', this initiative focuses on larger-scale community improvements, where multiple businesses and volunteers work together over several days to help transform local spaces. Community groups can apply for support, detailing their project needs such as refurbishments or redecorations, and a panel matches these with suitable business partners who then donate their time, skills, and resources.

Several successful projects have already benefited from Community SOS. For example, Merly's Kitchen in Astley partnered with a local company to create a mental wellness garden area, enhancing community services. Aspull Olympic Wrestling Club received help fixing hidden leaks and upgrading facilities, improving the experience for young athletes. Similarly, Heath Street Methodist Church had its meeting room redecorated and refurbished, providing a refreshed space for community activities.

Planning for Ageing Well: Creating the Right Homes and Support for Later Life

We recognise that having the right homes for people as they age is key to supporting independence, wellbeing, and quality of life—especially within our own housing stock, where we aim to lead by example. Meeting current and future needs requires a long-term, practical approach to housing options, including sheltered housing.

The immediate priority is to continue delivering essential improvements to existing sheltered housing to ensure safety, comfort, and compliance with the highest standards. We have recently completed a comprehensive review of our sheltered schemes and low-rise flats with a focus on fire safety. Work is now underway to replace fire doors and carry out fire compartmentation measures to enhance fire resistance and containment, ensuring these homes remain safe and secure for residents. Alongside these urgent safety upgrades, we have developed a detailed 10-year plan for sheltered housing. This plan integrates fire safety improvements with broader maintenance and modernization works, reflecting a strong commitment to maintaining high-quality, fit-for-purpose homes that meet the needs of older residents today.

Looking ahead, we know that the traditional sheltered housing model may not fully align with the evolving expectations, lifestyles, and accessibility needs of future generations. Some existing schemes have become harder to let and may need to be adapted or reimagined. To address this, **we will undertake a thorough review of our sheltered housing offer, involving meaningful engagement with younger older people—those approaching retirement—to understand their preferences and aspirations.** This future-focused work may explore a range of options, including modernising existing schemes, repurposing or decommissioning some buildings, or developing new housing models that better support independence and wellbeing in later life.

At the same time, we acknowledge that most people prefer to age in place, remaining in their own homes and communities. We will look to best practice from across the country and collaborate with partners to enhance the adaptability and accessibility of homes, strengthen local support networks, and improve access to advice, services, and technology—ensuring residents can live safely and comfortably for as long as possible.





Exploring a Downsizing Support Offer

As part of our broader efforts to plan for ageing well and provide the right homes and support, we will look at how best to assist older residents who choose to move to more manageable homes. Many living in larger properties that are increasingly difficult to maintain, heat, or manage may want to downsize. We understand that moving home later in life is a deeply personal decision—one that can involve emotional, practical, and financial challenges. For many, concerns about affordability, disruption, loss of connection to a familiar home, or simply not knowing what options exist can act as barriers to downsizing. This will always be the resident's choice—we are here to support, not to pressure.

We will research and shape a potential downsizing support offer tailored to the needs of local older residents. This work will look at how we can provide trusted, person-centred advice, including:

- Proactive and sensitive one-to-one support.
- Clear information about housing choices.
- Opportunities to hear from others who have successfully made the move.

In addition, we will explore the kind of practical help that could make downsizing easier and more appealing—such as assistance with removals, decluttering, tenancy changes, utility transfers, and, where needed, financial support. For those with care needs, we will also consider how this offer can be integrated with support from health and adult social care services.

We also recognise the importance of helping people settle into their new communities. As part of this work, we will look at options such as welcome visits, follow-up check-ins, and links to local groups or befriending schemes to support social connection and wellbeing.

Being Realistic About Access to Council Housing

Given the scale of demand, it is clear that **not everyone on the housing register will be offered a council home, and we believe it is important to manage expectations around access to social housing.** The current housing register includes around 12,500 applicants— a level of demand that significantly exceeds the number of homes available. This can create false hope for many households, despite their registration, as it is simply not possible to offer a council home to everyone on the list.

To address this, we are taking steps to ensure that the system is fair, transparent, and focused on those in greatest need. A key part of this is revising the eligibility criteria to better reflect local priorities. The updated policy will exclude applicants who own their own home and those without a local connection to the Wigan borough.. This change is expected to reduce the overall size of the waiting list by around 50%, allowing the council to better prioritise and support those with the most urgent housing needs.

The council will continue to operate its choice-based lettings system, which remains an effective and trusted approach. However, the allocations policy itself is being reformed. The current points-based model will be replaced with a simplified banding system that continues to prioritise applicants based on need, while also taking into account the amount of time they've spent on the register. This change aims to create a more balanced and realistic process, ensuring that people understand how homes are allocated and who is most likely to be housed.

Ultimately, these changes reflect a more honest and pragmatic approach—aligning housing supply with demand and focusing resources where they are needed most.

Making the Best Use of Existing Affordable Housing

With thousands of people waiting for a home, we are doing everything we can to create more opportunities for residents—not only by building new homes, but also by making the best possible use of the affordable housing we already have.

We will ensure that existing homes continue to meet the needs of local people now and in the future. By working closely with our housing association partners and other stakeholders, we can unlock more value from existing homes and better match them to changing household needs.

We will explore practical ways to improve the availability and suitability of affordable housing across the borough, including:

- Extending or adapting homes to create additional space, particularly for larger families;
- Supporting tenants to move within the system, including into more suitable or accessible homes, and helping those who wish to take steps towards homeownership; and
- Working positively with private landlords and housing associations to improve standards and increase the range of quality, affordable options available locally.

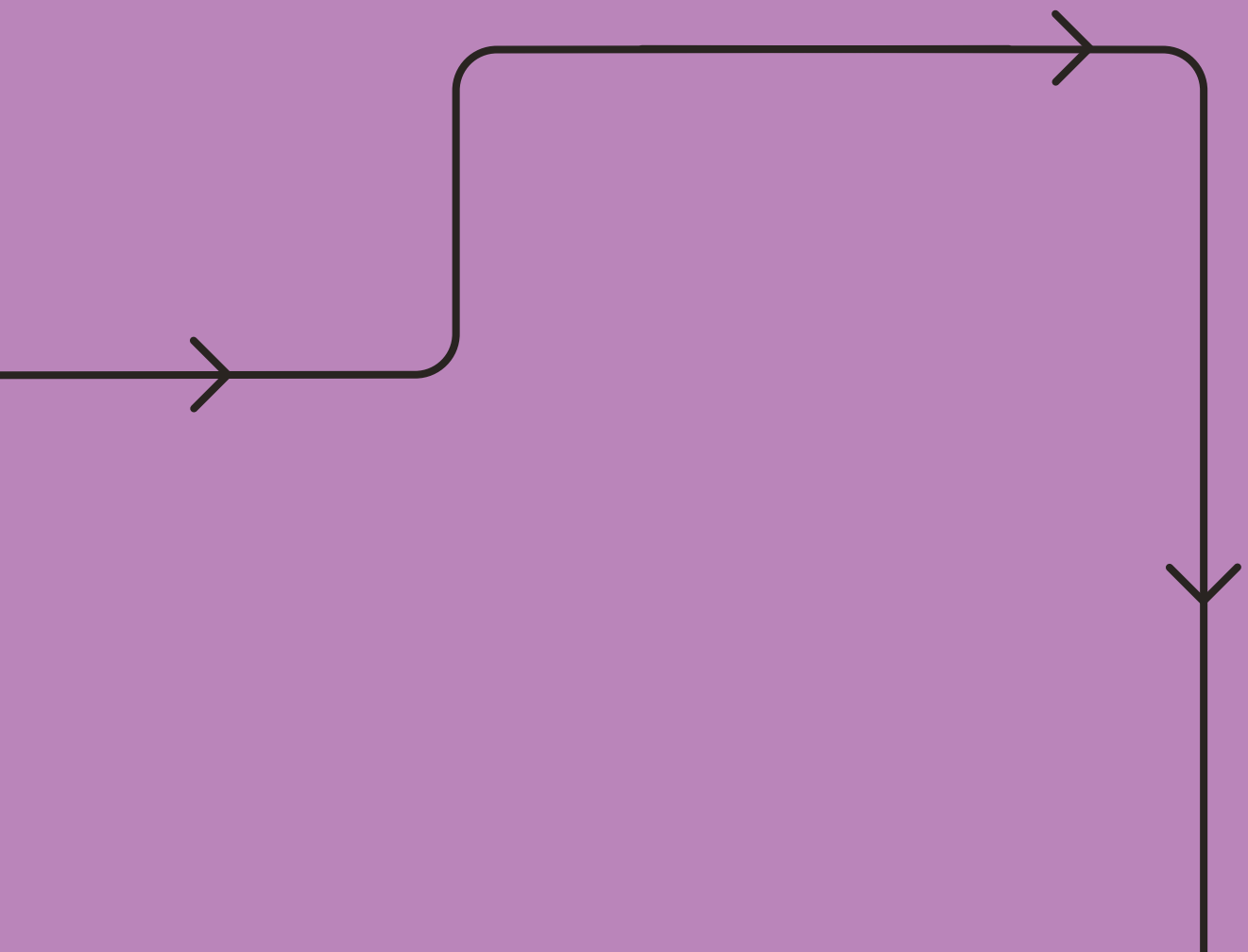






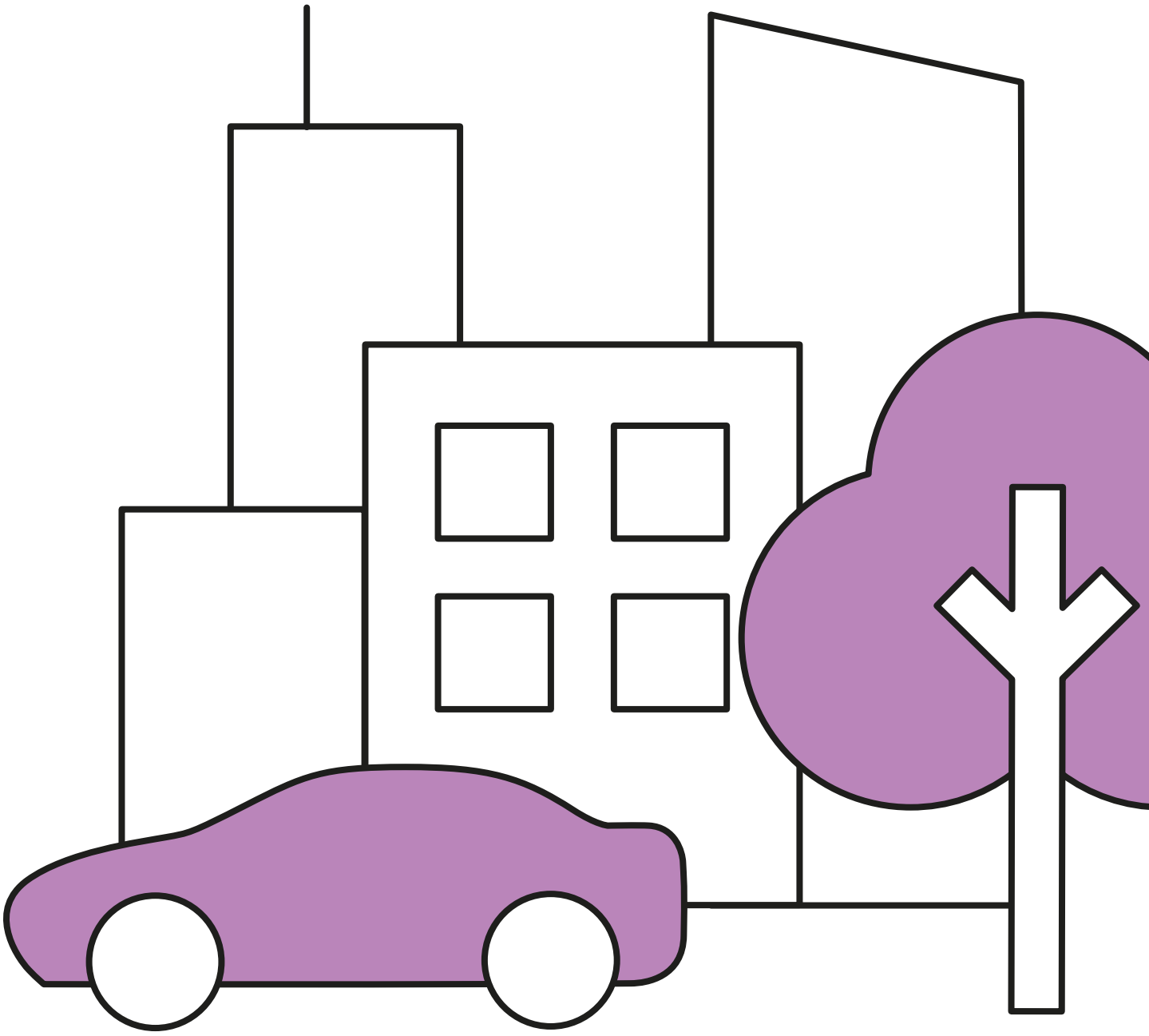


Resilient Communities - Healthy Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods



We have long recognised that healthy homes, a healthy planet, and **healthy communities are interconnected**— and central to the wellbeing and resilience of our residents. The quality of homes and the environment they sit in are the foundations for people's health, safety, and quality of life. A safe, warm, and secure home not only supports good physical health, by reducing risks such as damp, cold, and overcrowding, but also plays a critical role in promoting mental health by providing stability, security, and a sense of belonging.

We already invest heavily in creating homes that are safe, warm, and affordable to run, while actively tackling climate change and protecting the borough's natural assets for future generations. This approach goes beyond words— it reflects a deep commitment to connecting environmental sustainability with improved health outcomes and stronger communities. Through these efforts, we are continually working to be a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive place where everyone can thrive today and tomorrow.



Supporting Employment Through Health: The WorkWell Programme

Wigan Council's WorkWell programme is a vital early intervention service that helps residents overcome health-related challenges affecting their ability to work. Delivered in partnership with NHS Greater Manchester, Ingeus, and The Growth Company, WorkWell offers personalised support through experienced work and health coaches. The programme supports individuals facing mental health issues, musculoskeletal conditions, neurodiverse challenges, and other health concerns by providing tailored advice, access to community resources, and skills development. Its goal is to help people remain in employment, return to work after illness, or find new opportunities, improving both their physical and mental wellbeing.

We Have a Whole System Approach to Good Health

Our approach to health and wellbeing is grounded in a comprehensive, whole-system model aimed at improving health outcomes across the entire population and throughout all stages of life. We work with a range of partners through collaborative frameworks such as the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Healthier Wigan Partnership. These partnerships integrate services across health, social care, and the voluntary and community sectors, ensuring that care is personalised, community-focused, and centred on early intervention and prevention. Residents are actively involved through community engagement and co-production initiatives, helping to shape services that respond to local needs and priorities.



Planning for Health and Wellbeing

We will ensure that new developments support physical and mental health by providing strong social infrastructure, including health and social care, education, community facilities, and quality open spaces for play and recreation. Our draft local plan requires major developments to promote healthier environments through Health Impact Assessments or Planning for Health Checklists (Policy PE1). New housing growth will increase demand on already stretched services, so developments of 10 or more homes are required to contribute financially to expanding local health, education, and community infrastructure (Policy PE4).

Ensuring Quality and Compliance in the Private Rented Sector

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) provide valuable, flexible housing options that meet diverse needs, particularly for single individuals and those requiring affordable accommodation. However, HMOs can also present significant challenges, including risks of overcrowding, strain on local services, parking congestion, and impacts on neighbourhood character and amenity. To address these concerns, in 2020 we introduced an Article 4 Direction for Swinley and Central Leigh. This means that any new HMO development in these areas now requires planning permission, enabling closer scrutiny of proposals to ensure that they meet our high standards for quality, safety, and neighbourhood impact. Following the success of this approach, we have now extended the Article 4 Direction across the whole borough to ensure consistent control and better protection for all communities in our borough. These measures form a key part of our broader housing strategy to manage diverse housing needs while sustaining neighbourhood stability.

Selective licensing is a regulatory tool that requires landlords in specific areas to obtain a licence to operate their rental properties. This helps **improve housing standards, address issues like antisocial behaviour, and promote better management of private rented homes.** As part of our wider strategy to raise standards in the Private Rented Sector, we will explore the potential benefits of introducing selective licensing. Should we determine that it adds value to our existing measures, we will carry out public consultation about introducing selective licensing, on a defined area basis.



Neighbourhood Transformation

We are transforming neighbourhoods by working in partnership with local residents and businesses, recognising that communities themselves best understand their unique needs and opportunities. This approach, central to Mission 2 of making all towns and neighbourhoods flourish, places people and relationships at the heart of the housing strategy and service delivery. This collaborative model enables tailored housing solutions that respond to the distinct character and needs of each neighbourhood rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Our neighbourhood transformation approach builds on trusted relationships with local voices, empowering communities to influence decisions on housing developments. For example, community-led housing initiatives and estate regeneration schemes in areas like Leigh and Hindley have demonstrated how resident involvement leads to more inclusive, sustainable outcomes.

Delivering a Cleaner, Greener, Safer Borough

We create neighbourhoods where people feel safe, connected, and proud of where they live. Through the 'Our Town' initiative, we have continued to strengthen local identity, support cleaner and greener environments, and address the safety concerns raised by residents. More recently we have expanded the scope of Our Town to include safety alongside environmental improvements. The integration of wider council services—along with partners such as Greater Manchester Police, Fire and Rescue, local schools, and community groups—has enabled a more coordinated and responsive approach to tackling local challenges, including anti-social behaviour and environmental decline.

In support of this work, we have developed a Cleaner, Greener, Safer Dashboard. This uses detailed, localised data to target interventions more effectively, focusing resources where need is greatest. It enables us and our partners to make informed decisions based on community intelligence, deprivation data, and wider determinants of health and wellbeing.

Income Maximisation: Strengthening Financial Resilience

Our Income Maximisation Strategy plays a vital role in supporting residents facing financial hardship. **By helping individuals identify and claim the full range of benefits, grants, and financial support they're entitled to, we create financial stability and reduce inequalities.** Through the wider 'Here for You' campaign, more than £6.4 million has been accessed in unclaimed support, with over 250 events attended by 1,500+ people.

We will expand this service throughout the lifetime of the housing strategy and beyond. Building on our proactive, community-focused approach, we will further develop our data modelling and intelligence tools to identify residents at risk of financial hardship, fuel poverty, or housing insecurity. We will increase the number of local events, drop-ins, and outreach activities, ensuring that support is accessible in trusted, welcoming community spaces. We will also strengthen partnerships with organisations such as Citizens Advice, Age UK, and Green Doctor to provide holistic, wraparound support. Income maximisation will be embedded across our housing advice, tenancy sustainment, and homelessness prevention services, placing financial resilience at the heart of secure and stable housing.

Income Maximisation in Action

William and Pamela, an older couple living in the borough, were struggling to manage increasing living costs on a limited income. Although they were entitled to several forms of financial support, they were unaware of what was available or how to apply.

After attending a local Income Maximisation event organised by Wigan Council, they were offered one-to-one support from trained officers who completed a full financial health check. As a result, William and Pamela were helped to successfully apply for:

- Pension Credit, including the Severe Disability and Carer's Premiums
- Attendance Allowance for both individuals
- Council Tax Reduction
- Housing Benefit

This transformed their financial situation, helping to ease daily pressures and enabling them to remain independent in their home. Just as importantly, the interaction gave them peace of mind and a renewed sense of security—knowing that help was available when they needed it.

Community Resilience and Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

Wigan Council's Community Resilience Team (CRT) help to keep neighbourhoods safe and supportive. The team investigates anti-social behaviour (ASB), especially neighbour disputes and noise complaints, and works closely with police, youth services, and community partners to respond to issues like youth-related ASB and street drinking in town centres.

Wigan already has a strong service in place, with a proven approach that has reduced youth-related ASB by 34%, keeping young people out of the justice system and giving them better chances for the future. The council also uses tools like CCTV on estates to prevent and respond to issues early.

However, we recognise that the current ASB reporting system can be confusing, with different teams handling different parts of the process. By reviewing our processes, we will make it easier for residents to report concerns, simplifying the system so people only need to explain their problem once and get the right help quickly.

Healthy Homes: Foundations for Health and Independence

Poor housing conditions—such as cold, damp, overcrowding, or hazards—can have a profound impact on health and wellbeing. In Wigan borough, around a third of households (33%) are at risk of living in a cold home, with damp and mould affecting up to 45% of private rented homes. Cold, poorly insulated homes are linked to higher rates of respiratory illness, cardiovascular disease, depression, and anxiety, with the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) noting that health risks increase sharply when outdoor temperatures fall below 6°C.

The impact is particularly severe for vulnerable groups. Nearly 60% of excessively cold homes are occupied by at least one person aged 55 or over, contributing to the 2,645 hospital admissions per 100,000 older people in Wigan due to falls in 2022/23—well above the Greater Manchester average. For children, experiencing multiple housing problems raises the risk of ill-health and disability by up to 25%, with lone parent households among the most likely to live with damp.

By tackling poor housing conditions, we can improve health, reduce hospital admissions, and help people remain independent for longer, while easing pressure on health and social care services.

Warm Homes: Tackling Fuel Poverty and Improving Health

Research shows that cold homes contribute to thousands of excess winter deaths across the UK and increase hospital admissions for respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.

To address these challenges, Wigan Council provides the Affordable Warmth service, a coordinated, single-point referral system for local fuel poor households. The Affordable Warmth Team help residents living in cold or inefficient homes by providing a comprehensive package of services aimed at improving home warmth, safety, and energy efficiency. We carry out Healthy Homes Checks to identify issues and connect homeowners and private renters with funding for essential improvements— such as boiler repairs, insulation, heating systems, and draught-proofing. Alongside home upgrades, we also offer advice on cutting energy costs and ensure people are claiming the benefits and income support they're entitled to, helping to improve both comfort and financial wellbeing.

Warming homes and improving energy efficiency are critical steps toward enhancing residents' health and wellbeing. However, these efforts also sit within the wider context of climate change—a defining challenge that requires coordinated action at a borough level to ensure a sustainable, resilient future for Wigan.



From Cold to Comfort: How the Affordable Warmth Team Transforms Homes

Mrs X was referred to the Affordable Warmth Team after her Primary Assessor identified she needed a wetroom adaptation. However, before this could proceed, she required a new boiler and full heating system—she had been without a working boiler or radiators for some time.

As Mrs X was a hoarder, she first needed support to declutter her home. With help from her Primary Assessor and social worker, this was achieved, allowing the team to check her eligibility for heating and energy grants. Unfortunately, due to the scale of the works, local ECO4 installers were unable to assist.

Recognising Mrs X's health needs and lack of funding options, the team secured internal funding from a legacy GMCA grant. A trusted installer from the Council's Good Trader Scheme was appointed, and a full central heating system was installed within days. Mrs X now has a warm, safe home adapted to meet her needs.

Warm Homes: Local Grant (WH:LG)

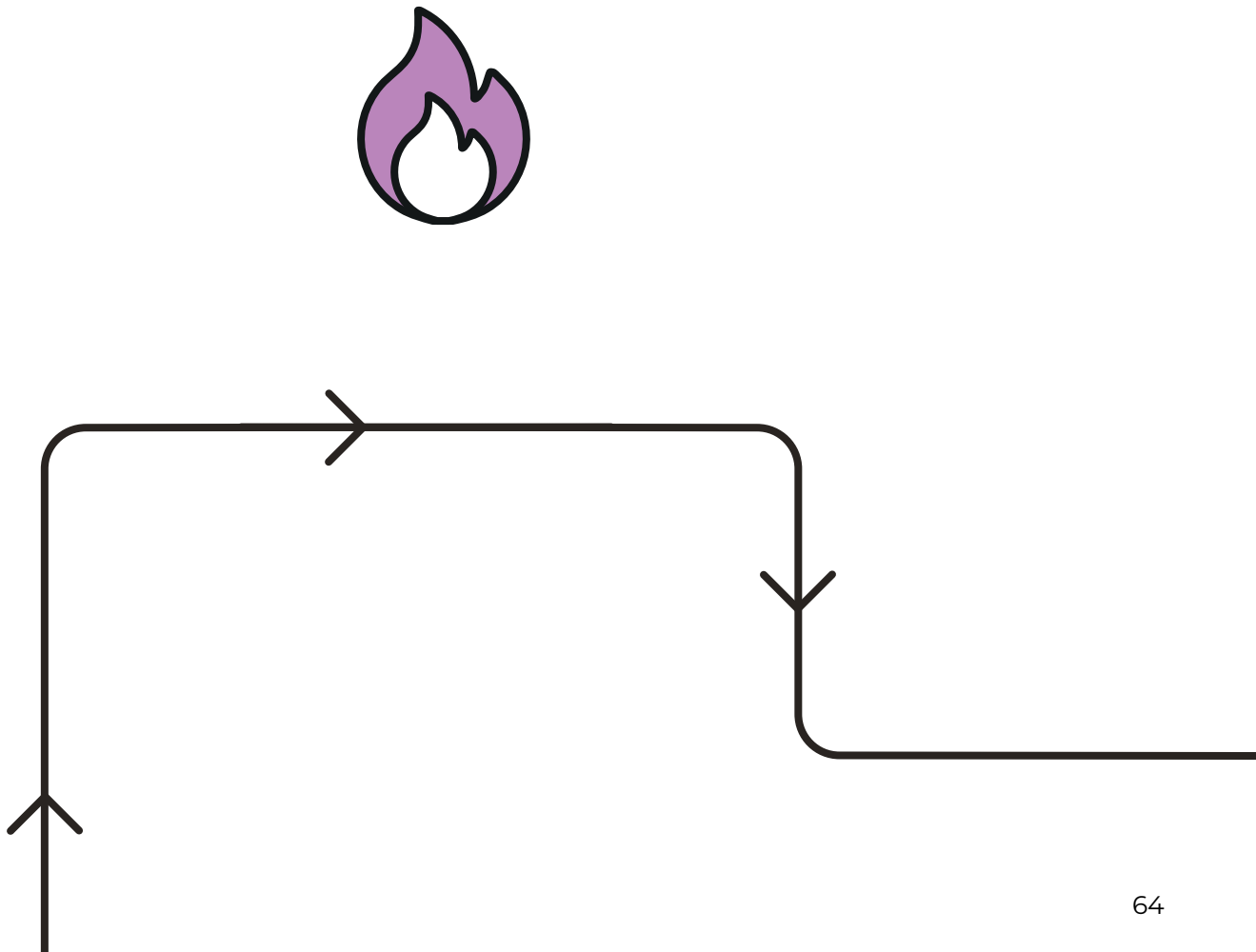
Between April 2025 and March 2028, we will participate in Greater Manchester's devolved allocation of the national Warm Homes: Local Grant, providing up to £30,000 per household for fabric and clean-heat retrofits, at no cost to eligible occupants.

The scheme is aimed at residents in high-deprivation postcodes, who are living in homes with an EPC rating of D–G. Delivery will focus on priority neighbourhoods identified as having the highest need. A dedicated Resident Engagement Officer and Technical Officer will lead the programme locally, working closely with households to encourage participation, arrange assessments, manage installations, and ensure high-quality technical delivery.

In addition to physical home upgrades, **the scheme will deliver extensive community engagement, helping residents to develop skills and knowledge around retrofitting and energy efficiency.** This will include practical advice on reducing energy use and maximising the benefits of improvements.

By improving the thermal efficiency of homes and enabling a shift towards low-carbon heating, the initiative will play a central role in Wigan's Climate Change and Healthy Homes strategy—cutting carbon emissions, reducing fuel poverty, improving housing comfort and security, and creating opportunities for local skills development and green jobs.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) is leading the delivery of a Healthy Homes Service, which Wigan Council will actively support and adopt locally. This service includes programmes such as Home Maintenance Assistance for vulnerable homeowners and tenants, Hospital Discharge Assistance to enable timely and safe returns from hospital, Dementia Assistance for home adaptations, and the use of assistive technology to promote independence.





LEAD Project Delivers £1.7m Retrofit Value and Cuts Carbon in Wigan

Wigan Council's LEAD project (Aug 2023-Mar 2025) delivered targeted energy efficiency and clean heating advice to hard-to-reach and vulnerable households, including those in hard-to-retrofit homes. Through the council's project team, over 1,700 residents were engaged via 57 events and communications reached 319,000 contacts. Bespoke assessments were completed for 57 homes, identifying 29 hard-to-treat properties, with 56% of residents going on to retrofit— many self-funded. LEAD supported access to ECO4 Flex and the Great British Insulation Scheme, with 572 homes improved and 193 more planned. With a £164,000 investment, the project generated £1.7 million in retrofit value, delivering average household savings of £768 and cutting CO_2 emissions by over 940 tonnes annually. Success was driven by personalised advice, thermal imaging, and low-cost options, highlighting the impact of clear information and resident motivation.

ECO4 Energy Efficiency Support in Wigan

Wigan Council actively participates in the UK Government's Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) scheme, which helps low-income and vulnerable households improve home energy efficiency. The scheme provides measures such as insulation, heating upgrades, and renewable technologies and runs until late-2026..

Wigan's delivery is coordinated through the Greater Manchester Retrofit Portal, with local partners like Next Energy Solutions conducting surveys and installations. The council supplements this with advice and support through the Local Energy Advice Demonstrator (LEAD) project, helping residents access funding and navigate retrofit options.

The ECO4 scheme includes a flexible eligibility pathway (ECO4 Flex) to support households not traditionally qualifying for benefits but facing fuel poverty or health vulnerabilities. This approach ensures wider access to energy-saving improvements across Wigan.

Promoting Reliable Trading

The Affordable Warmth Team regularly signpost to the Good Trader Scheme, which offers a trusted directory of local businesses and contractors who have committed to fair and transparent trading practices. All listed businesses have been vetted and are monitored through customer feedback and performance reviews. The Handyman service provided by Age UK is also referred into which is particularly valuable for older and vulnerable residents who may need support with smaller repairs, adaptations, or safety-related improvements.

Since the ECO4 Flex scheme began in 2023:

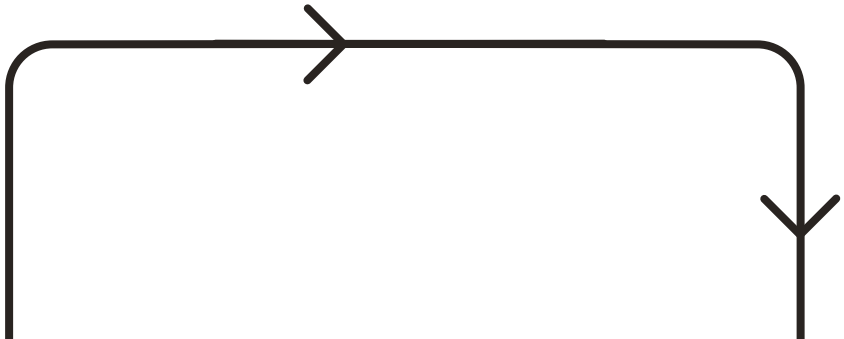
600 homes in the Wigan borough have benefited from home improvement measures

Over £3 million in grant funding has been provided, funding measures such as boiler replacements, air source heat pumps, solar panels, and loft and wall insulation

Household energy bills have reduced, with an average **annual bill saving of £565.47** for households who participated in the scheme

Huge CO2 savings have been achieved, of 1682 tonnes.'





Climate Action and Resilience

We formally declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019, underlining the urgent need to address climate change and its wide-ranging impacts. Our commitment is to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2038, aligning with Greater Manchester's regional targets and national frameworks.

To guide this work, we adopted an Outline Climate Change Strategy in 2020, which sets a clear roadmap that integrates environmental, economic, and community priorities, and in 2022, we launched the Climate Coalition— a partnership of businesses, community groups, public sector organisations, and residents— to foster collective action. The coalition drives thematic projects and workshops, helping to deliver the council's climate objectives while promoting healthier, more resilient communities.

The Hive: Powering Community Action on Climate Change in Wigan

The Hive is a vibrant, community-led network dedicated to raising awareness, sharing knowledge, and inspiring collective action on climate change and environmental sustainability across the Wigan borough. Supporting our broader climate emergency response, The Hive empowers residents, local groups, and businesses to work together to reduce carbon footprints and strengthen resilience to climate impacts. Key activities include:

- Hosting engagement workshops, talks, and events on energy efficiency, waste reduction, sustainable transport, biodiversity, and other green topics.
- Connecting local environmental groups, community projects, and individuals eager to contribute to sustainability efforts.
- Providing practical resources and advice to help households and organisations adopt climate-friendly behaviours and improvements.



Wigan as a Landlord: Energy Efficiency and Sustainability Initiatives

We will reduce carbon emissions by decarbonising our housing stock, in line with national targets for all social homes to meet at least EPC Band C by 2030 and Greater Manchester's ambition for net-zero emissions by 2038. We've identified around 5,700 council homes rated EPC D or below for improvement and launched a major retrofit programme focused on fabric-first measures such as roof insulation and solar PV systems. In partnership with Connolly Ltd, around 170 homes have already benefited from these upgrades. Our efforts are supported by £1.9 million from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and nearly £2 million from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to improve insulation, ventilation, heating, and energy controls.

Low carbon heating is a key part of our approach. So far, we've installed 365 air source heat pumps, delivering efficient electric heating and helping to reduce emissions, energy use, and running costs. We're also expanding renewable energy, with over 1,393 council homes now equipped with solar PV systems. These generate over £12.36 million in income for our Housing Revenue Account and reduce emissions by more than 1,253 tonnes of CO_2 each year. We're committed to phasing out natural gas, particularly in off-gas-grid areas, and replacing it with cleaner alternatives.

Resident engagement is central to our success. We provide tenants with clear advice on how to use new low-temperature heating and ventilation systems effectively. We also work closely with health and environmental teams to identify vulnerable residents early and support them through targeted interventions, such as insulation, boiler replacements, and draught proofing. Together, these efforts are creating warmer, more efficient homes and supporting our journey to net zero.



Sustainable New Build

Wigan Council continues to ensure new homes are designed and constructed to meet enhanced environmental standards. New developments integrate decentralised, renewable, and low carbon energy systems in line with the Greater Manchester Housing Strategy.



Low-Carbon Affordable Housing

Popple Site, Atherton - Pioneering New Development

The Popple site in Atherton (developed by Northstone and Torus Homes) is a flagship development showcasing a commitment to sustainable, low-carbon housing. The scheme features air source heat pumps, triple glazing, and smart energy monitoring systems to reduce emissions and lower household bills. All homes include electric vehicle charging points and are designed to exceed building regulations on energy efficiency. This development supports the Greater Manchester Housing Strategy and sets a strong benchmark for future low-carbon housing in the borough.

Passivhaus Social Housing – Ultra-Efficient Living

We are delivering Passivhaus-certified social homes in phases across the borough, meeting one of the world's most rigorous energy efficiency standards. These homes feature super-insulated walls, triple glazing, airtight construction, and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery to reduce energy use by up to 90%. With renewable energy technologies integrated into the design, they offer excellent comfort, low running costs, and improved air quality—demonstrating how we are leading on sustainable, future-proof housing.

This commitment includes schemes such as the redevelopment of St William's Church in Ince, Wigan, which also achieved Passivhaus certification, reflecting our ambition to set the standard for energy-efficient, affordable homes across the borough.

The Seasons, Worsley Mesnes – Regeneration Through Sustainability

The Seasons development by Keepmoat Homes in Worsley Mesnes combines regeneration with sustainable design. Homes are equipped with rooftop solar panels, EV charging points, advanced insulation, and efficient heating systems, achieving up to 69% energy savings compared to older stock. This large-scale project contributes to environmental goals while delivering community benefits including new green spaces, facilities, and infrastructure—highlighting how partnership with developers can support climate-friendly housing growth.

Conclusion: Progress with Unity in Housing

We are excited about our ambitious housing strategy, which represents a comprehensive roadmap for creating inclusive, sustainable communities where everyone can thrive.

This strategy will be carefully monitored through robust performance frameworks, with progress tracked against clear targets and outcomes. A comprehensive delivery plan is in place, supported by dedicated resources, strong partnerships, and regular review mechanisms to ensure we remain on track to achieve our vision of Progress with Unity.

Ten Key Strategic Areas Where This Strategy Will Transform Wigan Borough

Meeting Housing Need at Scale: Delivering 972 new homes annually through to 2040, with 4,295 homes allocated across six strategic sites to drive sustainable growth and regeneration.

Creating Affordable Housing Opportunities: Expanding affordable housing provision across all tenures, including social rent, shared ownership, and innovative models like Build to Rent with 20% affordable housing requirements.

Transforming Town Centres into Vibrant Communities: Regenerating all ten town centres as mixed-use neighbourhoods, with flagship projects like the £135 million Fettlers scheme creating over 400 new homes in Wigan town centre.

Supporting Ageing and Vulnerable Populations: Addressing the needs of Wigan's rapidly ageing population through specialist housing, Extra Care provision, and integrated health and housing services.

Achieving Climate and Energy Goals: Decarbonising housing stock to meet net zero by 2038, with major retrofit programmes, renewable energy systems, and Passivhaus standards for new developments.

Strengthening the Private Rented Sector: Improving standards and tenant outcomes through the Ethical Lettings Agency, landlord support, enhanced regulation, and the Greater Manchester Good Landlord Charter.

Preventing and Addressing Homelessness: Implementing comprehensive prevention strategies, expanding supported accommodation, and creating clear pathways to independent living for vulnerable groups.

Delivering Housing-Led Health Improvements: Connecting housing interventions with health outcomes through warm homes programmes, healthy housing assessments, and integrated health and housing services.

Maximising Existing Housing Assets: Bringing empty homes back into use, optimising council housing through asset management strategies, and supporting residents to access appropriate housing across all tenures.

Building Resilient, Connected Neighbourhoods: Creating communities where people feel safe, connected, and proud through neighbourhood transformation, community engagement, and place-based investment in infrastructure and services.

Wigan Borough Housing Strategy - Glossary of Terms

A

Affordable Housing
Housing provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market, including social rented, affordable rented, and intermediate housing (such as shared ownership).

Affordable Rent
Housing let by registered providers at up to 80% of market rent, inclusive of service charges.

Affordable Warmth Service
A coordinated service providing support to fuel-poor households, including home improvements, energy efficiency measures, and income maximisation advice.

Article 4 Direction
A planning tool that removes permitted development rights, requiring planning permission for certain changes of use (such as converting properties to HMOs).

Asset Management
The strategic approach to managing and investing in housing stock to ensure homes remain safe, decent, and sustainable over the long term.

Awaab's Law
Legislation mandating prompt action by social landlords to address hazardous damp and mould in homes.

B

Brownfield Site
Previously developed land that is or was occupied by a permanent structure, which may be suitable for redevelopment.

Build to Rent
Purpose-built housing designed specifically for private rent, typically professionally managed with longer tenancies and additional amenities.

Building Regulations Part M4(2) and M4(3)
Standards for accessible and adaptable dwellings (M4(2)) and wheelchair user dwellings (M4(3)).

C

Care Leaver
A young person who has been in the care of the local authority and is transitioning to independent living. Care leavers have protected characteristics under equality legislation.

Choice-Based Lettings
A system allowing housing applicants to bid for available properties rather than being allocated homes by the council.

Climate Coalition
A partnership of businesses, community groups, public organisations, and residents working collectively to deliver climate objectives in the Wigan borough.

Commuted Sum
A financial contribution paid by developers as an alternative to providing affordable housing on-site, used to support affordable housing delivery elsewhere.

Council Tax Bands
Property valuation bands (A-H) used to determine council tax liability, with Band A representing the lowest value properties.

Custom Build
Housing built by an individual or group who directly organise the design and construction of their new home.

D

Decent Homes Standard
Government standard requiring social housing to be warm, weatherproof, have modern facilities, and be in a reasonable state of repair.

Decarbonisation
The process of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, particularly through energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)
Mandatory grant to help meet the costs of adapting a property for a disabled person's needs.

Downsizing
Moving from a larger property to a smaller, more manageable home, often undertaken by older residents.

E

ECO4 (Energy Company Obligation)
Government scheme requiring larger energy suppliers to fund energy efficiency improvements for low-income and vulnerable households.

EPC (Energy Performance Certificate)
Certificate showing the energy efficiency rating of a property on a scale from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient).

Equity Loan Scheme
Wigan Council scheme providing loans covering 30% of the purchase price to help qualifying buyers access new build homes.

Ethical Lettings Agency
Council-operated service helping landlords let properties to tenants in housing need while providing professional management support.

Exempt Accommodation
Supported housing where housing benefit can be claimed at higher rates due to additional care and support provided to vulnerable residents.

Extra Care Housing
Self-contained homes with 24-hour care and support on-site, designed to help older people live independently.

F

First Homes
Affordable homeownership product offering homes at a minimum 30% discount to first-time buyers with local connections.

Foyer
Accommodation providing temporary housing, training, and support for young people aged 16-25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Fuel Poverty
When a household cannot afford to adequately heat their home due to low income, high energy costs, or poor energy efficiency.

G

GMCA (Greater Manchester Combined Authority)
The combined authority for Greater Manchester's ten districts, responsible for strategic planning and investment.

Good Landlord Charter
Greater Manchester voluntary scheme recognising landlords who meet enhanced standards beyond legal requirements.

Guarantor
A person who agrees to cover rent and property damage if a tenant fails to meet their obligations.

H

Health Impact Assessment
An assessment evaluating how a proposed development may affect population health and wellbeing.

HMO (House in Multiple Occupation)
A property rented by three or more people from more than one household who share facilities like kitchens or bathrooms.

Homelessness Solutions Service
Council service providing advice and assistance to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Housing Association
Not-for-profit organisation providing affordable housing, also known as a registered provider.

Housing Benefit
Support for people on low incomes to help pay rent (being replaced by Universal Credit).

Housing Register
List of people who have applied for social housing in the borough.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
Ring-fenced account containing income and expenditure related to council housing.

I

IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor)
Specialist providing support to victims and survivors of domestic abuse, particularly in high-risk cases.

Income Maximisation
Process of helping residents identify and claim the full range of benefits and financial support they are entitled to.

Intergenerational Living
Housing developments designed to accommodate residents of different ages and life stages within the same community.

L

LEAD (Local Energy Advice Demonstrator) Project
Project providing energy efficiency advice and support to hard-to-reach and vulnerable households.

Leasehold
A form of property ownership where the buyer owns the property for a fixed period but not the land it stands on.

Lettable Standard
The condition a property must meet before it can be let to tenants, covering safety, repairs, and cleanliness.

LHA (Local Housing Allowance)
The maximum amount of housing benefit available to private renters, based on property size and local area.

Local Connection
Criteria (such as residency, employment, or family ties) demonstrating a person's links to an area, often used in housing allocations.

Local Plan
Statutory planning document setting out the council's vision, policies, and site allocations for development over a 15-20 year period.

M

Move-On Accommodation
Housing provided for people leaving supported accommodation as they transition to independent living.

Mutual Exchange
Process allowing social housing tenants to swap homes with another tenant.

N

Net Zero
Achieving a balance between greenhouse gases emitted and removed from the atmosphere, effectively reducing net emissions to zero.

P

Passivhaus
Rigorous energy efficiency standard for buildings, achieving up to 90% reduction in heating and cooling energy compared to typical buildings.

Places for Everyone
Strategic planning framework for nine Greater Manchester districts setting out spatial development priorities.

Primary Assessor
Professional conducting initial assessments of care and support needs for adult social care services.

Private Rented Sector (PRS)
Housing rented from private landlords rather than social landlords or owner-occupied.

Progress with Unity
Wigan's updated strategic approach building on The Wigan Deal, setting out two missions and six ways of working.

R

Registered Provider
Organisation registered with the Regulator of Social Housing to provide social housing (typically housing associations).

Renters' Rights Act
New legislation reforming the private rented sector to provide greater protections for tenants.

Residential Care
Accommodation providing personal care and support for people who cannot live independently.

Retrofit
Upgrading existing buildings with energy efficiency measures and low-carbon technologies.

Right to Buy
Scheme allowing eligible social housing tenants to purchase their home at a discount.

Rough Sleeping
Sleeping outside or in places not designed for habitation (such as cars, doorways, or tents).

RSH (Regulator of Social Housing)
Independent regulator of social housing providers in England.

RSSS (Rough Sleeper Support Service)
Service providing intensive support to people experiencing rough sleeping.

S

Section 106 Agreement
Legal agreement between local authorities and developers securing planning obligations, often including affordable housing provision.

Selective Licensing
Scheme requiring private landlords in designated areas to obtain a licence to rent out their properties.

Self-Build
Housing built or commissioned by individuals for their own use.

Shared Lives
Care model enabling adults with disabilities or older people to live within supportive family environments.

Shared Ownership
Affordable homeownership scheme where buyers purchase a share of a property and pay rent on the remainder.

Sheltered Housing
Age-restricted housing with some support services, designed for older people who can live independently with minimal assistance.

SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment)
Assessment identifying land with potential for housing development.

Social Housing
Affordable housing provided by local authorities and housing associations at below-market rents.

Social Rent
Housing let at rents determined by the national rent formula, typically around 50-60% of market rent.

Supported Accommodation
Housing with additional support services for vulnerable people to help them live independently.

Supported Housing Prospectus
Document setting out Wigan's needs and priorities for specialist and supported housing to guide market delivery.

T

Temporary Accommodation
Housing provided on a short-term basis to households who are homeless while longer-term solutions are arranged.

Tenancy Relations Officer
Officer providing advice, advocacy, and mediation support to private rented sector tenants.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)
Standardised satisfaction data that social landlords must collect and publish to enable performance comparison.

Tenure
The legal arrangement under which someone occupies a home (e.g., owner-occupation, social rent, private rent).

TRA (Tenants and Residents Association)
Group representing the interests of tenants and residents in a particular area or development.

Trauma-Informed Approach
Service delivery recognising the impact of trauma and prioritising safety, trust, and empowerment in support relationships.

U

Under-Occupation
When a household occupies a property larger than they need based on bedroom standards.

Universal Credit
Benefit combining support for living costs including help with housing costs, replacing several previous benefits.

V

Vacancy Rate
Percentage of dwellings that are empty.

Void Property
An empty property, particularly used to describe empty council homes between tenancies.

W

Warm Homes: Local Grant (WH:LG)
Devolved funding providing up to £30,000 per household for fabric and clean-heat retrofits in high-deprivation areas.

Wheelchair Accessible Housing
Housing designed to Building Regulations Part M4(3) standards to be fully accessible for wheelchair users.

WorkWell Programme
Early intervention service helping residents overcome health-related challenges affecting their ability to work.