

East Sussex: Our funding gap



Have your say on supported accommodation (mental health)

East Sussex County Council is facing a financial gap of £55 million next year.

Most local authorities are experiencing similar cost pressures at the moment.

Despite these pressures, we have a legal responsibility to set a balanced budget.

That means we need to make some difficult decisions about what we spend.

Every part of the Council will need to find savings to help close the gap.

Cabinet considered some of the savings proposals in September.

Any proposed changes that affect services will have a public consultation.

This is one of the Adult Social Care and Health public consultations.

The consultations start on 3 October and close on 28 November 2024.

Decisions are expected to be made on the proposals in February 2025.

Services will continue as normal while we are consulting.

This consultation is about our proposal to stop funding the on-site support for these accommodation services. Read on to find out more or visit our website to take part online: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/funding-gap-asch

Background information

Our funding gap

East Sussex County Council (the Council) has a net budget of £538.1 million for the year from April 2024 to March 2025. Our net budget is the money we have to spend which is financed by business rates, council tax receipts and the revenue support grant we get from the national government.

We expect our net budget for next year to be a similar amount. This means that we are facing a financial gap of £55 million for 2025/26. The financial gap is the difference between the funding available and the cost of keeping services at their present level.

Most local authorities are facing similar pressures. We face this gap even though we are a well-run and efficient council which has saved £140 million since 2010 and found new ways to work effectively through difficult times. Unfortunately, the cost pressures we face now are so great that efficiency alone is not enough and the limited reserves of money we have available would not be enough to meet the financial gap. Most importantly, reserves can only be spent once and could not repeatedly fill the financial gap which councils face every year. It is also not possible to close the whole gap by raising council tax as the increase that would be required is beyond the limit set by national Government.

We are legally obliged to close the financial gap and balance our budget. This means that some tough decisions will have to be made and reduced services are possible in all areas. When making these decisions, our priority will be to maintain protection and support, wherever possible, for the most vulnerable people in our community.

There is more information about why we have to make savings and what we are doing to highlight the issues local authorities face with the national Government on our website at www.eastsussex.gov.uk/your-council/finance/east-sussex-our-funding-gap

Social care support

Adult Social Care and Health is a department of East Sussex County Council. We work with people aged 18 and over who live in East Sussex. We help people live healthy and independent lives, whatever that may look like for them. We look at people's strengths, capabilities, support network, community and difficulties and work with them to find solutions.

The Council has a legal duty to provide social care support to those who are eligible. About three quarters of the East Sussex budget goes on providing social care for children and adults, with adult social care accounting for nearly half of the budget (48%). Care and support for adults is not free and we charge for most of our services. The amount people pay depends on their financial situation, but most people have to pay something towards their care, with the remaining costs paid by the Council.

Nationally, social care is under pressure due to a combination of demographic, financial, and systemic factors. East Sussex is no stranger to this, facing unique challenges which impact on the need for support and services in the county. Around 25% of the East Sussex population is over 65 compared to a national figure of 18%, average wages remain lower than the national average, and 30,000 people in the county are living in some of the most deprived areas of England. We have also seen a 40% increase in the average weekly cost of providing care in East Sussex since 2020.

As people live longer, they may require care and support for longer, and their care and support needs are likely to become more complex over time. There is also evidence that the cost of living challenges have increased demand for care, as well as making people less able to afford their contribution towards the cost of care.

As social care is such a large part of the Council's budget we will need to make savings to services in this area too. Reduced services are likely, and we will need to review staff numbers, but the amount we need to save can't be achieved through reducing the workforce alone.

Developing the savings proposals

Given the financial gap we are facing, we know it is impossible to avoid some of our residents being negatively affected by the difficult decisions that we need to make. We have tried our best to identify proposed savings that would have the least possible impact on people's care and wellbeing.

We know too that many of our external partners in the NHS, local authorities, providers and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) are experiencing their own pressures in terms of demand for services and funding challenges. Where we can, we've tried to take that into account in looking for savings.

Our priority in Adult Social Care and Health is to meet our legal duties under the Care Act. To help us to do this, we have identified funding areas that we think need to be protected when we are looking at savings options.

The priority funding areas are:

- **Community care budget:** This budget covers the cost of care that is provided to adults who are eligible for social care support because of a disability or health condition. This budget is already under pressure because more people need our help, the cost of providing care is increasing, and our residents are increasingly struggling to pay their contribution towards the cost of care.
- **Carers:** As well as protecting the budget for community care which funds support for people who are eligible for social care support, we have tried to protect the direct support we provide to unpaid carers who are looking after their family members and friends. This is because carers play an invaluable role in meeting care and support needs for so many residents and reduce the amount of support residents need from other services.
- **Voluntary and community sector (VCSE):** These organisations make a huge contribution to preventing, reducing and delaying the need for care and support from the community care budget. For this reason, we want to protect the funding that we provide to support this sector as far as possible, particularly where we can demonstrate that services are supporting our statutory duties and other priority funding areas.
- **Frontline workers:** We need to ensure we have enough social work staff and occupational therapy workers to carry out assessments and put care and support in place. We also need to retain enough financial assessment staff to ensure we are funding those who are most in need and that people pay the correct contribution.
- **Care market:** We need to ensure we have enough staff so that we can support the care market and ensure we have a good supply of services that deliver the best value.

Consulting on the savings proposals

There are no easy choices and we know that some residents will be very worried about how they and their loved ones might be affected. We are committed to consulting with you on these difficult decisions and providing as much information about their potential impact as we can to support decision making.

There are 11 savings proposals for Adult Social Care and Health that affect services. We are consulting with the public about all of these. As well as these savings, we are also looking at other funding, staffing and income generation opportunities.

This consultation is about funding for the on-site support offer for supported accommodation for adults with mental health needs.

You can find out more about the other consultations and take part by visiting our website: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/funding-gap-asch

A Government Budget is planned during the consultation period on 30 October 2024. If any Budget announcements affect these proposals, then that will be taken into account during the decision making process next year.

Consultation overview: Supported Accommodation

How the service works now

The services affected by this proposal provide accommodation and support to adults aged 18+ with a recognised mental health need, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The buildings that provide the accommodation are owned and managed by the service providers. The Council provides the funding for the on-site support element of the service for people living in the accommodation. Rental costs and any other charges are funded separately by the client, often through enhanced housing benefit. We work with the five district and borough councils in East Sussex to commission the services, as they have legal responsibility for housing.

There are 45 accommodation units across three buildings. These are a mixture of studio, one-bedroom flats, and shared accommodation where people have their own room but share kitchen and bathroom facilities.

The supported accommodation services for adults with a mental health need operate out of three buildings:

- Pathways - Bexhill-on-Sea
- Hyde Gardens - Eastbourne
- Bal Edmund - Hastings

Support services are available to residents for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provided either by on-site staff, or with out-of-hours on-call management. The staff work with residents to develop a personalised and psychologically informed approach to support planning to help them develop independent living and tenancy sustainment skills. They also support residents to access training, qualifications and employment.

Most people stay in supported accommodation for between a year and 18 months. The need for the service means there are rarely vacancies and the service is currently full, with 45 people living in the three mental health supported accommodation buildings in Eastbourne, Hastings and Rother. The majority of referrals to the service come from the five district and borough Housing Teams in East Sussex. They refer individuals that they have a duty to provide accommodation to because they are assessed as being homeless or threatened with homelessness.

What we are proposing to change

We are proposing to stop funding the on-site support offer that is provided to residents living in these accommodation services. Given the efficiency savings that providers have made in recent years, stopping this funding may mean the services have to close unless alternative funding could be found. This is because the individuals using the services have been identified as requiring a level of support greater than is available in standard temporary accommodation. If this support is removed the landlord may feel they are unable to continue to run the service. If the services did have to close, any residents living there would need to find alternative accommodation.

Why we are proposing this saving

We recognise the value of these services and the role they play in preventing the need for other types of support, including adult social care. That is why we have protected these services over the last 10 years of budget reductions. Unfortunately, the financial pressures we face mean that we need to look at all of our spending closely.

The legal responsibility for providing advice, help and housing to those who are homeless, or at risk of becoming so, lies with district and borough councils. There is no legal requirement for us to fund the on-site support services and many local authorities have already reduced or withdrawn funding for similar services. We are therefore proposing to stop funding the support element of these services.

How people and organisations would be affected

The withdrawal of this funding makes it likely that the services would have to close. Any residents living there would need to be found alternative accommodation. Whilst it may be possible for some of them to move out in a planned way, there is a significant risk that service users may become homeless. This is due to the lack of affordable housing locally.

If services closed, it would limit the housing options available to those with a mental health need who are homeless, or at risk of becoming so in future. There is a risk that we would see an increase in street homelessness in East Sussex and that more people would be at risk of death and suicide on the streets.

We have funded these services because we know they reduce people's need for support from other parts of the system. Ending the on-site support provision funding would likely place a significant additional pressure on district and borough housing services and increase their costs for temporary accommodation. District and borough authorities face similar financial pressures and may struggle to cope with the additional burdens this proposal may create if the services were forced to close.

Services supporting rough sleepers and those who are homeless are also likely to see an increase in demand. That includes services funded by the Council and those provided by the voluntary and community sector.

It is likely, that if the accommodation closed, we would see an increased need for mental health support and safeguarding, with more people potentially becoming eligible for support from us as a result of their needs increasing. Health services, including GPs and mental health services, would likely also see an increased need for people to access their services.

A priority for the consultation is to work with our partners to help them explore the options for keeping services open. If that's not possible, we would work with them to

transition people to new accommodation, and if possible see what other services could potentially support adults with mental health needs in future.

Have your say on the proposal

We are keen to hear from everyone with an interest, including:

- people who have used the services or whose family members or friends have,
- providers who run the services and the staff who work for the services,
- staff and organisations who work with the services or refer people to them,
- providers who support people who use the services, and
- our partners in the public and voluntary sectors who work with the services and would be affected by the proposed changes.

How you can take part

The consultation closes on 28 November 2024. Please note that if we receive any consultation responses after this date, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to take them into account.

You can fill in the survey online or request a paper copy by emailing or calling (see the 'how to get in touch with us' box later for details). The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

We can accept consultation responses via letter and email if you aren't able to fill in the survey. These are a little harder to keep track of and analyse, so it would help us if people can use the survey if they are able to.

If you need the survey in another format or language, please get in touch with us.

COMPLETE ME ONLINE

Use your phone or tablet to scan the QR code

Visit our website at eastsussex.gov.uk/funding-gap-asch



As well as the survey, we will ensure that those affected have the opportunity to talk to staff about the proposal through dedicated consultation events. Information about these opportunities will be shared directly with those who are affected by the proposal.

How organisations can take part

Official responses from organisations should be submitted by email or post (see below for contact details). Individual staff wanting to take part should fill in the survey.

What happens next?

Decisions about whether we go ahead with the savings proposals are expected to be made by Councillors in February 2025. This means there won't be any changes to services before that date. Anyone currently using the services can continue to do so in the normal way and the services can continue to accept new clients.

Councillors will consider the results of the consultation alongside a report that sets out what we are proposing to do next and an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA). An EqIA is a tool we use to understand how particular groups and communities would be affected by a proposed change. The papers, including the EqIA, will be available to the public on our website in advance of the meeting.

The time frame for any changes to services would reflect the legal and contractual requirements for the service in question and we would work closely with those people and organisations who would be affected.

How to get in touch with us

Email is the best way to get in touch with us if you want to request a paper copy of the survey, have a question about the consultation or need help to take part: consultationASC@eastsussex.gov.uk

You can call us between 10am-4pm Monday-Thursday on: 01273 481 242. If you aren't able to call between these times, you can still call us on this number, but please leave a message and we will call you back.

Our postal address is: Funding Gap Consultations, North A Floor, County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE

If you have a question about the support and services you are currently receiving, please talk to the organisation providing the service.

The questionnaire

This survey is anonymous and we don't ask you to provide any personal information. There is an optional 'about you' section at the end. Please ensure that any comments you make don't include any names or personal details of you or anyone else. You can find our privacy notice about how the data will be stored and processed by East Sussex County Council on our website:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/privacy/funding-gap-consultations-commissioned

Q1) Are you completing the survey as: (Please tick one box)

- Someone who uses/has used the supported accommodation services (please tell us which service in the box below)
- The family or carer of someone who uses/has used the services
- Someone who works for the supported accommodation services (please tell us which service in the box below)
- Someone who lives in East Sussex
- Someone who works in health or social care in East Sussex
- Someone who works in housing in East Sussex
- Someone who works in the voluntary or community sector
- Other (please provide details below)

If you ticked 'other' please provide details here:

To submit an official response from an organisation, such as from the board, senior leaders or heads of service, please provide it by email or letter, rather than completing the survey. Individual members of staff should fill in the survey as normal.

Q2a) How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to stop the on-site support for accommodation services for adults with mental health needs?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not sure

Q2b) Please use the box below to tell us why you agree or disagree:

Q3) How would the proposed change to stop the on-site support for accommodation services for adults with mental health needs affect you?

What you tell us will help us carry out an equality impact assessment.

The next section is for people who live in one of the affected accommodation services. If you don't, please go to Q6.

Q4) If this service had not been available when you needed help, where would you have gone instead for accommodation and support?

Q5) Have you used BHT’s East Sussex Housing-Related Floating Support Service in the last year?

We are asking this because other savings proposals may affect this service and we want to understand the impact of making savings across a range of housing services.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Q6) Do you have any other suggestions or comments you would like to make?

- Yes (use the box below for your comments)
- No

Thank you for taking part in the consultation. If you would like to, please fill in the optional ‘about you’ section on the next pages.

**Post your completed survey to: Funding Gap Consultations, North A Floor,
County Hall, St Anne’s Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE**

About You: Equalities Monitoring Form

We want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally and that no one gets left out. That's why we ask you these questions. Your data is important to us, and we won't share the information you provide with anyone else. Your information will only be used and reported anonymously to support the activity you have completed the 'About You' survey for.

You do not have to answer these questions but by doing so you are helping to ensure our services effectively meet the needs of all our service users.

Full privacy notice: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/privacy/about-you

1. What age are you?

..... years

Prefer not to say

2. What is your gender?

Female

Male

Non-binary

Prefer to self-describe, please write in:

Prefer not to say

3. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

Yes

No, write in gender identity:

Prefer not to say

4. What is your ethnic group?

White

English/Welsh/Scottish /Northern Irish/British

Irish

Gypsy / Irish Traveller

Roma

Any other White background, write in:

.....

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups

White & Black Caribbean

White & Black African

White & Asian

Any other Mixed or Multiple background, write in:

.....

Asian or Asian British

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background, write in:

.....

Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

Caribbean

African background, write in

Any other Black, Black British or Caribbean background, write in:

.....

Other ethnic group

Arab

Any other ethnic group, write in:

.....

Prefer not to say

5. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- 'Straight' / Heterosexual
- Gay or Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Prefer to self-describe, please write in:
- Prefer not to say

6. What is your religion or belief?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> No religion<input type="checkbox"/> Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)<input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist<input type="checkbox"/> Hindu<input type="checkbox"/> Jewish<input type="checkbox"/> Muslim<input type="checkbox"/> Sikh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Any other religion, write in:
.....<input type="checkbox"/> Philosophical belief, write in
.....<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
|--|---|

7a. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

- Yes
- No (go to question 8)
- Prefer not to say (go to question 8)

7b. Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?

- Yes, a lot
- Yes, a little
- Not at all
- Prefer not to say

7c. If 'yes', please state the condition or illness. If you have more than one please tick all that apply. If none apply, please mark 'Other' and write an answer in.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Physical Impairment<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory Impairment<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disability/Difficulty<input type="checkbox"/> Long-standing illness<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health condition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Neurodivergent condition<input type="checkbox"/> Other Developmental condition<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please write in)
.....<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
|--|--|

8a. Are you currently pregnant or did you give birth in the last twelve months?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

8b. Are there any children under the age of 18 living in your household?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

9a. Do you look after, or give any help or support to, anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age?

- Yes (go to question 9b)
- No (go to question 10a)
- Prefer not to say (go to question 10a)

9b. If yes, for how many hours a week?

- 9 hours a week or less
- 10 to 19 hours a week
- 20 to 34 hours a week
- 35 to 49 hours a week
- 50 hours or more a week
- Prefer not to say

9c. If yes, do you care for a.....?

- Parent
- Partner/spouse
- Child with special needs
- Other family member
- Friend
- Other (please give details)
- Prefer not to say

10a. Armed Forces Service: Are you currently serving, or have you previously served in the UK Armed Forces (this includes Reservists or part-time service)?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

10b. Are you in a household or family where someone is currently or was previously serving in the UK Armed Forces?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

11. Please tell us your postcode

.....

- Prefer not to say