



South Ribble Borough Council

Homelessness Strategy

2017 – 2020

South Ribble Borough Council June 2017

The Council has a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to carry out review of homelessness in the borough and to publish a strategy. This document replaces the previous Prevention of Homelessness Review and Strategy 2012 -16

The review of homelessness was carried out in late 2016 to early 2017 and the full details of the review can be found at Appendix B.

South Ribble has 79% home ownership – either outright or with a mortgage, 10.5% is social rented and 9.3% private rented. There is a lack of shared housing and affordability poses an issue for the under 35's and also larger households on benefits. Social Housing lets have increased slightly over the last 4 years and at time of writing the waiting list consisted of 1267 households. The largest list is for 1 bedroomed accommodation however 2 bedroomed houses attract the most expressions of interest and have the longest waiting time. Affordability assessments for prospective tenants have been introduced and can prove to be a barrier particularly for younger people.

Homelessness presentations have reduced over the last 4 years due to an increased focus on prevention work. The main causes of homelessness are

Parents no longer willing to accommodate

Relationship breakdown (violent and non violent)

Ending of assured shorthold tenancy.

The main reason for priority need is **dependent children and lone parents** are the most common household type.

Over the last 18 months the main age groups presenting as homeless are 18-24 year olds, 34 to 54 year olds and then 25 to 34.

There are no older people, who in the main are able to access social housing fairly quickly

Although we do have some 16/17 year olds there is a lot of preventative work carried out by KEY youth charity for this age group and single people up to age 25.

The main reasons that people come in for advice are

Being asked to leave by family or friends or sofa surfing,

Private sector possession action and relationship breakdown – both violent and non violent.

There are a number of prevention initiatives in place with the most preventions being access to social housing, resolving benefit problems or access to supported housing.

South Ribble does not have a large number of rough sleepers – between 2 and 3 are usually reported. The Council does have procedures in place to accommodate verified rough sleepers where there is provision available.

The uncertainty of the future of supported accommodation as a result of the cuts to be made at a County level and also because of the changes in the funding for supported housing present major

challenges. The effects of upcoming welfare reform make it more important than ever to pro-actively prevent homelessness, and to ensure households and in particular young people have a realistic view of the affordability of housing in the borough. The number of lets within social housing has increased slightly, however the voluntary Right to Buy and the impact of starter homes may affect the supply of new homes to let and the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance Rates to social housing will affect affordability for some client groups. There is therefore a need to engage as pro-actively as possible with the private sector and an evaluation of the landlord incentive scheme will help to inform this. The private rented sector in South Ribble represents less than 10% and the market is such that landlords have a supply of tenants to rent their properties. Discussions in the homeless forum and also multi agency meetings highlight that people presenting as homeless are rarely just seeking housing and there are often a variety of reasons why homelessness occurs. In the current climate where there is a reduction in funding and services it is increasingly important that the Council works in partnerships with the County Council, other partners and stakeholders to ensure that the prevention of homelessness is achieved.

The Homelessness Reduction Act had cross party support and is expected to be enacted in Spring 2018. New burdens funding has been announced, however amounts at a district level are not known. The Act will bring new responsibilities and will significantly alter the way in which the Council works with homeless families and also single people who do not meet priority need thresholds. This is an opportunity to review service delivery and the resources required to ensure that the Council is able to meet the requirements set out in the act.

The success of the new strategy will be measured on the following factors:

- Increasing the number of preventions achieved – base line 355
- Ensuring that statutory presentations remain low – base line 55
- No increase in the use of temporary accommodation and that Bed and Breakfast accommodation use does not increase – base line 5 in a year, no more than 4 weeks for families

The strategy will ensure that the following priorities are delivered

- Sufficient accommodation is and will be available
- Preventing homelessness is a priority
- A satisfactory provision of information, advice, assistance and support

Sufficient accommodation is and will be available

The priorities for the delivery of new housing in the borough are set out in the Local Housing framework 2016. The ten year city deal programme is also supporting the creation of new jobs and homes across South Ribble and Preston.

In terms of this strategy the focus will be on the access to social housing and private rented accommodation. The introduction of welfare reform creates challenges to this and the affordability of housing in both tenures and as part of this priority the ways in which this can be tackled will be explored

Preventing homelessness is a priority

The Council already has a focus on the prevention of homelessness, cuts at a County level and the availability of supported housing and support services will have an impact on this. It is essential therefore that the Council continues to review and update the resources and tools it has at its

disposal to prevent homelessness. The Councils Corporate plan has a target to ensure that more people are prevented from becoming homeless.

A satisfactory provision of advice information and support

The Homelessness reduction Act when it is enacted will strengthen the help that has to be given to all client groups and is an opportunity to review services and ensure that partnerships are strengthened to meet the new requirements

These priorities will be achieved by delivering the actions set out in the action plan at Appendix A. the Housing Options Team will be responsible for ensuring that the identified actions are delivered. The action plan will be reviewed annually and reported on to Senior Management Team

DRAFT