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**South Ribble Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

2020-2025

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**Foreword**

South Ribble Borough Council are pleased to introduce this new Strategy for the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough sleeping in the borough which sets out our priorities over the next five years.

This is not the first strategy produced by the Council however it is the first to consider the effect of the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018.

Housing and the homes that we live in play a key role in our lives and have a direct impact on our health and wellbeing and as such reducing homelessness is a key priority for the Council. Homelessness is not just manifested by rough sleeping, although this is homelessness in its most visible and distressing form. Homelessness is a complex issue and its causes are wide and varied requiring a joined-up approach with partner organisations in order to ensure that accessible accommodation is provided and support needs are met.

The strategy has been formulated following a review of homelessness in the Borough which involved extensive consultation with stakeholders and partners. The results of the review can be found at appendix A.

The Council is proud of the partnerships it has developed locally, with our neighbouring districts and also with key stakeholders across Lancashire. Through working together with the common goal of preventing homelessness and providing good quality accommodation to those who require it, the Council and its partners shall ensure that the number of homeless households within the Borough are minimised and those who become homeless receive good quality accommodation and support tailored to their needs.

This is the essence of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which will seek to continuously improve all that we do, adapt the new challenges and changing circumstances and work in an innovative and effective manner with partners to address the causes of homelessness as well as providing high quality services to those who become homeless.

**Cllr Mick Titherington**

**Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Leisure**



**Executive Summary**

The Homelessness Strategy is underpinned by the Homelessness Act 2002 which requires every local authority to carry out a review of homelessness every 5 years and publish a strategy based on the results of the review. This strategy is based on the findings of the homelessness review which is attached at Appendix 1.

The review of homelessness has highlighted the following 3 main reasons for people presenting as homeless to the Council:

* Family and friends no longer willing to accommodate
* Ending of Assured shorthold tenancies
* Domestic Abuse

The main reasons for presentations locally reflect the regional and national picture. In order to address these priorities, the review identified a range of support needs and interventions in relation to domestic abuse, mental health, young people and physical health conditions which if tackled could have a positive impact on the number of homeless presentations to the Council.

South Ribble has few rough sleepers – normally between 2 and 3 rough sleepers are reported at the annual count undertaken through a snapshot on a single given night in the year. Where the council identifies verifiable rough sleepers, it has procedures in place to accommodate them where necessary.

Presentations from single people have increased and together single males and females make up the biggest group presenting as homeless to the Council, followed by lone females with children. The main reason for a household having priority need is dependent children and it is likely that this trend will continue.

Benchmarking from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has indicated that South Ribble is achieving a good split of prevention and relief duties i.e. more prevention duties are accepted than relief duties and that the prevention work which is undertaken is positive. The percentage of cases relieved, however, are lower as a percentage of presentations and the snapshot indicates that the biggest group of people who disengage with the service are single people under 35, perhaps due to a lack of affordable options.

South Ribble as a Borough has a population comprising 79% home ownership – either outright or with a mortgage, 10.5% social rented stock and 9.3% private rented housing. There is a lack of shared housing and affordability is an issue for the under 35’s, particularly those under 25 and also larger households on benefits.

Social Housing lets have decreased slightly over the last 4 years and at time of writing the waiting list consisted of 1069 households. The greatest demand is for 1 bedroomed accommodation and 1 and 2 bedroomed properties attract the most expressions of interest and have the longest waiting time. Affordability and the requirement for guarantors in the private sector are proving to be a barrier particularly for younger people.

People who are unemployed are the largest group presenting as homeless followed by those who are not seeking work for various reasons.

Within South Ribble 96% of all households presenting as homeless are UK nationals and the vast majority are recorded as White British reflecting the ethnic diversity of the borough.

The consultation undertaken during the homelessness review highlighted a number of services that exist to prevent homelessness however challenges and improvements to the way services are delivered were also identified which can be summarised as follows:

**Challenges**

* **Cuts in funding for services provided by partners** – Supporting People Services including Floating Support and Accommodation Based Services, Lancashire Wellbeing Service, Youth Services
* **Impact of welfare benefit changes-** including sanctions, affordability if deductions are made or advances being paid back, length of time to process claims and money not being paid direct to landlords
* **Waiting lists for services and Dis engagement because of processes –** mental health, dual diagnosis, lack of support for chaotic lifestyles, lack of support in general
* **Lack of suitable accommodation –** particularly for young people following changes to supported housing, lack of shared housing, 1-bedroom housing, housing for complex needs, those with an offending background, and affordability in general
* **Issues with joint protocol arrangements**

**Improvements / Changes identified**

* A need for safe places to go and intermediary accommodation with different packages of support brought in
* HRA has increased involvement of housing officers but has not increased the actual housing options available
* Increased Support
* Better communication and partnership working
* Co-location of mental health services in other areas seen as a positive

**National context**

The following national policies guide and shape the delivery of local homelessness services:

* **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** – came into force in April 2018 and has specified new ways of working to assist homeless households
* **National Rough Sleeping strategy** – The Government is committed to halving rough sleeping by 20222 and ending it by 2027
* **Welfare Reform Act 2012** – includes the introduction of Universal Credit

**Links to Local Strategic Documents**

**Corporate Plan**

The Council’s new Corporate Plan 2019-23 has recently been published setting out the Council’s vision and corporate priorities for the next 4 years. The housing and homelessness priorities within the Corporate Plan are as follows:

* Reduce the number of homeless through developing a health and prevention focused approach
* Seek to deliver different models to provide quality homes that people can afford to live in whether they choose home ownership or rental accommodation
* Identify actions to take forward from the ‘Private Sector Stock Condition Survey’
* Work with partners and developers to manage the rate of delivery of new homes and commercial floor space by unlocking City Deal sites prioritising infrastructure development

**South Ribble Housing Strategy**

is currently being reviewed and will focus on

* Quality Homes
* Housing delivery
* Health and wellbeing
* Homelessness

**South Ribble Strategic Priorities for Homelessness**

The new strategy and action plan will seek to address the issues identified by the review and the success of the new strategy will be measured using the following key performance indicators (KPIs):

* Increasing the number of preventions/reliefs achieved by 5% over the year - base line 284
* Ensuring that statutory presentations reduce by 5% over the year – base line 66

0% increase in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation – base line 5 in a year and no more than 4 weeks in bed and breakfast for families

There are four overarching strategic priorities which shall inform and focus the council’s approach to preventing homelessness during the lifetime of the Strategy. They are:

|  |  |
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| **Vision** | Reduce the number of homeless through developing a health and prevention focused approach |

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| **Priorities** | Reduce homelessness by increasing prevention | Working with landlords and suppliers of accommodation to enhance the housing offer available for temporary and longer-term options including inter mediary and permanent housing |
| Improve health and wellbeing for all homeless applicants through effective and timely referral systems between services | Ensure that levels of rough sleeping remain low |

An action plan to support these priorities will be drawn up and reported on annually to Extended Leadership Team

**Resources available to prevent homelessness**

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| --- | --- |
| **Accommodation based services**  **Including supporting people and big lottery funded services** | **Voluntary and third sector partner services** |
| **Prevention activities using homelessness grant via MHCLG** | **Other funding including funding for Domestic Abuse and Cold Weather fund for rough sleepers** |
| **Registered provider housing via SelectMove** | **South Ribble Housing Needs Team and access to temporary accommodation** |
| **Portals and pathways to make duty to refer referrals in to the housing Needs Team** | **Discretionary Housing Payments and Housing Benefit** |
| **Private rented sector** | **DWP** |

**PRIORITY 1**

**REDUCE HOMELESSNESS BY INCREASING PREVENTION**

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| ACTION(S)  What we will do | RESOURCES  (Funding/Staff etc…) | TIMESCALES | OUTCOMES / MEASURES OF SUCCESS |
| Monitor, Learn from and Act on the implementation of the Homelessness reduction Act | South Ribble Borough Council Housing Needs team | Up to 2025 | 50% Reduction in number of cases where contact is lost. Baseline 20% of presentations  Increased preventions / reliefs by 5% )on the baseline of 284 per year  Reduction in number of main duty decisions by 5% on the baseline 66 per year |
| Ensure that the information on the website is relevant and up to date | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer | Up to 2025- Review website at 6 monthly intervals or when there is a change in legislation and service provided | Up to date information available for the public |
|  |  |  |  |
| Identify good practise around successful initiatives in the early identification of people at risk of homelessness. Develop options to introduce | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer | Produce an action plan by December 2020 | Increased preventions / reliefs by 5%on the baseline of 284 per year  Reduction in number of main duty decisions by 5% on the baseline 66 per year |

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| Develop training on homelessness for partner agencies | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer | Develop training and commence delivery by December 2020 | Deliver 4 at least sessions over the course of 2021  Increase early referrals with referral being no later than 5 days after first contact  Increase the number of successful preventions by 5% |
| Involve customers in the design of service delivery | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer | March 2021 | Customer insight and intelligence to be developed through customer satisfaction survey and used to shape services. |
| Review early intervention activities with Registered providers | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer | Carry out a review of notifications and outcomes by December 2020 | Appropriate and timely referrals received and acted upon and a reduction in the number of homelessness referrals received? |

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| Evaluate and commission initiatives funded via homelessness grant to prevent homelessness | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer  Homelessness grant funding  Procurement, legal and finance | Evaluate by end of March 2020 and consider options to re-commission | Services evaluated and re commissioned as required |
| Develop / maintain working relationships with DWP representatives | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer | Up to 2025 | Representation at forums to be in place and maintained to encourage 2 way communication |
| Keep existing protocols with Childrens Social care, hospitals and prisons under review and develop new ones with other services as appropriate | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer | Up to 2025 | Protocols are current and understood by all participants – and early referrals are increased with no more than 5 days elapsing between first contact and referral |

**PRIORITY 2**

**ENHANCE THE HOUSING OFFER AVAILABLE FOR TEMPORARY AND LONGER TERM OPTIONS**

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| ACTION(S)  What we will do | RESOURCES  (Funding/Staff etc…) | TIMESCALES | OUTCOMES / MEASURES OF SUCCESS |
| Review the allocation and procurement of temporary accommodation policies and procedures | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer | Allocation and procurement policies to be reviewed September 2020 and annually thereafter  Service level agreements for temporary accommodation updated annually | Policies and procedures up to date - Efficient use of temporary accommodation which meets the needs of clients and provides value for money to the council |
| Evaluate and re commission as appropriate temporary accommodation | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer  Joint with Preston City Council | By June 2021 | Evaluation and commissioning exercise undertaken by June 2021 and good quality value for money accommodation commissioned |
| Work with Central Lancashire Authorities and the Lancashire County Council on accommodation for people with complex needs | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer  LCC  Central Lancashire Authorities | By June 2021 | Provision of sufficient accommodation which is available as required for customers requiring support for complex needs |
| Work with private landlords to promote the private rented sector as a viable option including for those aged under 35 | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer  Private landlords | 6 monthly review reports to be undertaken from June 2020 up to 2025 | Increased access to the private rented sector and more landlords engaging with the service |
| Work with the Select Move partnership to monitor the implementation of the common allocations policy | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer | Attend bi- monthly steering group meetings  Monitor the implementation of the policy quarterly | Sufficient priority given to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. |
| Ensure adequate support for offenders and ex- offenders | Senior Housing Officer  Probation, Prisons ,Shelter | Continue to monitor the Lancashire prison protocol under review and engage with the Lancashire reducing reoffending board and other key stakeholders such as MAPPA to 2025 | Timely referrals for those with an offending background are received. Options for accommodation and support for ex-offenders are reviewed and enhanced. |

**PRIORITY 3**

**IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

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| ACTION(S)  What we will do | RESOURCES  (Funding/Staff etc…) | TIMESCALES | OUTCOMES / MEASURES OF SUCCESS |
| Establish joint ways of working to assist homeless households with mental health problems | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer  Mental Health providers | Joint information sharing event (with whom?) to be held by December 2020  Mapping of provision to be undertaken by December 2020  Joint working pathways to be agreed by December 2020 | Better understanding and referral processes between services |
| Utilise referent? to ensure that referrals are made to services that can assist homeless households to improve their health and wellbeing | South Ribble Housing Needs Team | On going to 2025 | Use of Refernet by officers maximised to facilitate referrals |
| Utilise the South Ribble Early Intervention Team (SRIT) to access services and support for homeless households | South Ribble Housing Needs Team  SRIT team | On going to 2025 | Access )to early support and intervention for homeless households is increased and is timely |

**PRIORITY 4**

**ACTIONS TO ENSURE THAT LEVELS OF ROUGH SLEEPING IN THE BOROUGH REMAIN LOW**

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| ACTION(S)  What we will do | RESOURCES  (Funding/Staff etc…) | TIMESCALES | OUTCOMES / MEASURES OF SUCCESS |
| Ensure that the information on the website is relevant and up to date including our response to rough sleeping | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer | Review the website by June 2020 and every 6 months thereafter | Improved information and advice available for the public and other agencies. |
| Maintain outreach to all sightings of rough sleepers | South Ribble Housing Needs Team | Ongoing to 2025 | Contact made with customers reported to be sleeping rough and support plan provided |
| Work with neighbouring authorities to enhance the offer for rough sleepers | Housing Options Team Leader / Senior Housing Officer  Preston City council  Chorley Council | Meeting to be arranged by June 2020 | Improved access to support , bedspaces and intervention for rough sleepers |