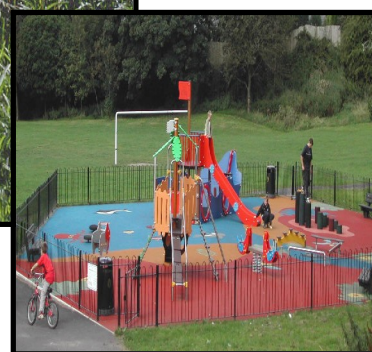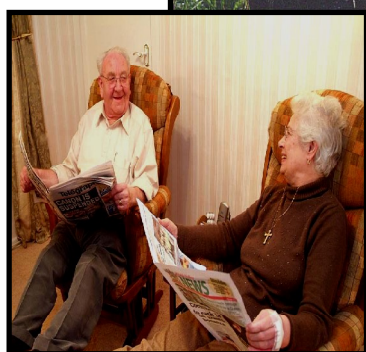# Ribble Valley Borough Council

Homelessness Strategy

2008 – 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Homelessness Act 2002 imposes a duty on local authorities to carry out a homelessness review for their district and, thereafter, to formulate and publish a strategy to prevent homeless and to provide accommodation and support to people who are, or may become homeless.

This is Ribble Valley's third Homelessness Strategy and it follows an annual review of service delivery and priorities. The Homelessness Review is required to cover:

- the scale and nature of homelessness in the Borough and consideration of the factors which could affect future levels upon the district;

- an audit and mapping of homelessness services within the Borough, looking at the various provision for accommodation and support for homeless people, how homelessness can be prevented and where gaps in the service are.

- a review of the resources available for preventing homelessness and ensuring that accommodation and support is available to homeless people in the area;

- a record of the views of stakeholders and service users;

- the links to other strategies which have an impact on the prevention and tackling of homelessness in the Borough.

A review of homelessness in Ribble Valley has been conducted using various tools, including data obtained from the P1E statistics, best value performance figures and an in-house homelessness database. Stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sectors have been consulted via the housing, homelessness and landlords forums operating in the Borough. These stakeholders represent service users from a wide range of agencies working with both priority and none priority homeless groups.

Continual regular and extensive consultations with stakeholders, including service users and a strong commitment to encourage all parties who participate in the Strategy vital to its success. The Strategy will cover a five-year period 2008 to 2013 and consequently implementation and action planning will be monitored regularly throughout the life of the Strategy. Monitoring will occur through both the Homelessness and Housing Forums who will analyse the result of various initiatives and actions and will make sure targets are being met.

Introduction to Homelessness Strategy

The development of Ribble Valley Borough Council's first Homelessness Strategy 2002 initiated a cultural shift in the Council's response to homelessness. Ribble Valley now places a high priority on tackling and responding to homelessness wherever the case is viewed as potentially preventable. This Strategy is written just as the ownership and management of its housing stock has been transferred to Ribble Valley Homes. The Council decided that the homelessness and housing advice functions will remain with the Council. However, Ribble Valley Homes will be a key partner delivering the homelessness service in that they will manage the temporary accommodation, housing waiting list and housing allocations on behalf of the Council. The Council recognises that homelessness is an issue that can only be tackled in partnership. Whilst the Council will lead on this work and retain the statutory responsibilities, key partners such as Housing Associations, Floating Support providers along with many other agencies and organisations all have an important role to play. It is therefore essential at this time that both the Council and its partners set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of each party to ensure the successful implementation of the Strategy.

The Homelessness Strategy therefore:

- Sets out the Council's vision and objectives for services for homeless people;

- Examines the national regional, sub regional and local context in which services operate;

- Assesses the needs of the borough's population in relation to homelessness services;

- Audits its current service;

- Sets out an action plan for service improvement.

Vision and Objectives

The Strategy must have a clear and concise vision of where it aims to be in the next five years. Through extensive consultation with all stakeholders in the Borough the Council has confirmed that the vision is "through partnership working with all stakeholders the Council's strategy sets out to prevent homelessness, provide effective support for households who are or may become homeless and make available sufficient affordable accommodation within the borough.

The Context

The Ribble Valley Borough is situated in the North East of Lancashire and with an area of 585 square kilometres is the largest district in the County. Over seventy percent of the Borough is in the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a clear reflection of the landscape quality of the area.

The borough has a population of around 56,900 with Clitheroe, the main administrative centre having 13,200 inhabitants. Clitheroe lies at the heart of the Borough whilst Longridge, the other main town, lies in the west. Longridge has a population of approximately 7,500. The remainder of the area is mainly rural with a number of villages ranging in size from large villages such as Whalley, Sabden and Chatburn through to small hamlets such as Great Mitton and Paythorne.

Ribble Valley is a relatively affluent area and is ranked 295th out of 354 English districts in the Index of Deprivation. However, six wards within the borough fall within the worst 10% of all English wards under the Access Services Index. This is due to the rural nature of the borough and the isolation faced by the population in a number of settlements, particularly those within the Forest of Bowland an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Health Profile for Ribble Valley is in the main far better than that for the region and nation.Life expectancy is in line with national levels but higher than neighbouring areas in Pennine Lancashire.

There are few teenage pregnancies and GCSE achievement is good. It is estimated that far fewer adults smoke than the national average and less than five per cent of the population reported their health as "poor" which is much lower than the regional and national average.

The 'fit for purpose' Housing Strategy 2004-2008 has guided the strategy housing service for the past 4 years. The main focus is development of affordable housing. The homelessness objectives within the document lifts the main priorities from this strategy. The diagram below shows where this document sits corporately and the links with other strategies.

Community Strategy

Housing Forum

Corporate Objectives

HOUSING STRATEGY

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Health & Homelessness Report

Landlords Forum/Newsletter

Homelessness Forum

Empty Property Strategy

The National Context

The Homelessness Act 2002 required all local authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy by 2003. The Strategy had to be the result of multi agency working and be informed by a thorough review of homelessness in the area under the services currently available to address it. The purpose of the review would highlight where there are gaps in the service provision and/or where service can be improved. The Strategy had to be realistic, jointly agreed as to how each agency intends to fill the gap and improve the services over a period of up to five years. The aims of the Strategy therefore are to achieve effective ways of:

- Planning and developing services that prevent homelessness in the Borough in line with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Homelessness Strategy "Sustainable Communities, Settled Homes, Changing Lives";

- Improving the standard of temporary accommodation in the Borough DCLG has issued revised statutory guidance on the quality of temporary accommodation used by local authorities;

- Working with other agencies that provides support to those households who are, or may become, homeless; who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again;

- Working with Housing Associations, private developers, private landlords and the Development Department, to deliver 50 units of affordable housing each year.

The Action Plan details the activities under each of these aims that the Council will be coordinating.

The Government's own Homelessness Strategy "Sustainable Communities, Settled Homes, Changing Lives" was published in March 2005. The Strategy took forward measures announced in the DCLG's five year plan supported by an increased investment in homelessness prevention. The Government's strategy sets out to provide more settled homes and initiatives across Government departments to tackle the wider symptoms and causes of homelessness, including action on health, employment, relationship breakdown, services for children and other associated issues.

Regional Context

The 2005 North West Regional Housing Strategy acknowledges that homelessness has made a pressing issue for the region. The region has seen, in recent years, an increase in homelessness, which has had wider ranges negative effects on individuals and communities. Taken as a whole the northwest has more homeless households than any other region apart from London. Local conditions are, however, different from the regional picture. A Lancashire Wide Homelessness Forum launched late 2008.

Sub-Regional Context

Pennine Lancashire established sub regional working groups in 2003 to assist in the development of strategies and shared best practice. The lead offices and officers working groups continue to meet and provide valuable opportunity to work in partnership, co-ordinate shared procedures and to network.

Housing Strategy

The availability of affordable housing is one of the most important needs for families and communities in the Ribble Valley. Developing affordable housing is a corporate ambition of the Council to meet the identified 'housing need'.
(Clyder Park, Mitchell Street)

With a house priced to an affordablity ratio of 9.9 – addressing affordability is a key factor in providing the homelessness service. In Ribble Valley there is proportionatley less stock in the lower Council Tax bands of A and B with 33% compared to Lancashire's 58% profile.

The tenure choice in the borough is limited; with only 700 social rented properties, the borough has one of the lowest percentages of social housing stock in Lancashire. The situation was further exagerbated by the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance. Ribble Valley is no longer considered a 'locality' in its own right. The majority of the borough is in a locality with Blackburn, reducing the housing allowance to be paid to Ribble Valley occupants. This authority was in the top five nationally for being most affected by the introduction of the new housing allowance.The introduction of LHA rates being calculated from the 30th percentile from April 2012 will again reduce LHA rates in the borough.

Policies introduced to address the situation include:

- An Affordable Housing Memorandum of Understanding requesting 30% of any site is developed as affordabel housing.
- Grant initiatives for development of private rented properties
- Programme to maintain current housing needs information on a parish basis to assist developers
- A protocol to work closely with planning and housing association to advise developers and enable development

Community Strategy

The community strategy lifts the key issues from this strategy as the actions to be achieved in the housing theme. These include to ensure supported housing is available for vulnerable households with the actions of reducing the length of time spent in temporary accommodation to 7 weeks and surveying users of the service to continue to improve the satisfaction. These actions are monitored annually.

Stock Transfer

Following stock transfer the Council will no longer be a direct provider of housing and will rely upon Housing Associations to meet identified housing need.

(Ribble Valley Homes Launch)

There are a number of issues surrounding stock transfer that are relevant to this strategy:

- Ribble Valley Homes (RVH) are committed to providing affordable rented housing. Rent levels in their properties are in line with social rent.

- The investment planned will ensure there will be major improvement in the quality of affordable housing in the borough.

- Over time fewer properties may be lost to the private sector, as only existing tenants will retain the right to buy. New tenants will qualify for a right to acquire which is less advantageous.

- Turnover in newly transferred housing tends to reduce, especially once improvements have been carried out, therefore there is likely to be less affordable housing coming over time through this route.   (Garnett Road,Clitheroe)

As mentioned above, the Council has contracted with RVH for the delivery of some of the homelessness functions. Following the transfer the Council retained the following duties in respect of homelessness:

- Making enquiries and/or decisions on homeless applications.

- Providing general housing advice.

- Reviewing homeless decisions upon appeal.

- Carrying out periodic review of homelessness and publish a homeless strategy.

- Monitoring the service provided by RVH as per service level agreement.

The Council has drawn up a service level agreement with RVH for the delivery of the homeless service following transfer. This includes:

- Maintaining the housing register.

- Securing permanent accommodation to discharge homelessness duty.

- Allocating the RVH stock as properties become available. This arrangement would be such that it was subject to a regular review. The Council will retain the ownership of the hostel and the units of accommodation at Longridge will be transferred with the remaining stock and leased to Ribble Valley Borough Council for temporary accommodation.

- Management of the Clitheroe Homeless Hostel and dedicated Longridge temporary accommodation units.

- Nomination to Housing Associations as their stock becomes available.

Ribble Valley have maintained strong connections with Ribble Valley Homes and have established a monthly monitoring group to discuss nominations and procedures between the organisations.

Achievements to date

The Council's first homelessness strategy was published in July 2003. This provided a strategic direction for the homeless prevention approach that has subsequently been adopted. Since 2003 there have been many significant achievements in Ribble Valley's response to tackling homeless and the Council has:

- Remodelled the service to deliver a housing advice approach and focus on homelessness prevention;

- Introduced a highly effective tenancy protection scheme which from July 2005 to date has provided 159 households to access accommodation in the private rented sector;

- Introduced a mediation service;

- Developed a sanctuary scheme with HARV (Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Domestic Violence Organisation);

- Introduced home visits to prevent parental eviction;

- Established a successful and well attended homeless forum;

- Maintained a low use of families being placed into bed and breakfast (0 in 2010);

- Carried out consultation events with homeless households;

- Worked with supporting people and floating support agencies to develop a floating support service available to all households with temporary tenancy support needs;

- Increased nomination rights to the private sector properties by 28 through grant initiatives for landlords;

- Maintain a repossession prevention fund to assist owner occupiers or tenants at risk of losing their home through no fault of their own.10 households have been assisted in 2010/2011.

(Whipp Avenue,Clitheroe)

- Significantly improved temporary accommodation facilities at the hostel, providing laundry facilities, communal meeting room, IT access,play and garden area;

- Undertaken a health and homelessness review, in partnership with Hyndburn Borough Council and Hyndburn and Ribble Valley PCT;

- Delivered a youth homelessness prevention initiative to all year 10 pupils in the borough and offer housing advice training to Ribble Valley Youth and Community staff;

- Process Mortgage Rescue applications for all owner occupiers at risk.

- Introduced referral health visitors to all families in temporary accommodation with children under 5;

- In our enabling role supported housing associations in their bids for 2008/2011,

which has been successful in achieving grants of 54 affordable units of accommodation.

- Introduced a homelessness database to more accurate record keeping.

- Support a dedictated Mental Health and Housing support worker across East Lancs.

```
                    Legal
                    advice      Mediation
    Homelessness
    prevention budget                     Home Visit


                         Homeless?                      Lia
Tenancy protection       How can we prevent     Liaise with  lan
      scheme                   it?              landlord


        Offer grant                          Floating tenancy
      assistance to                             support
        landlord       Discretionary
                      housing payment
```
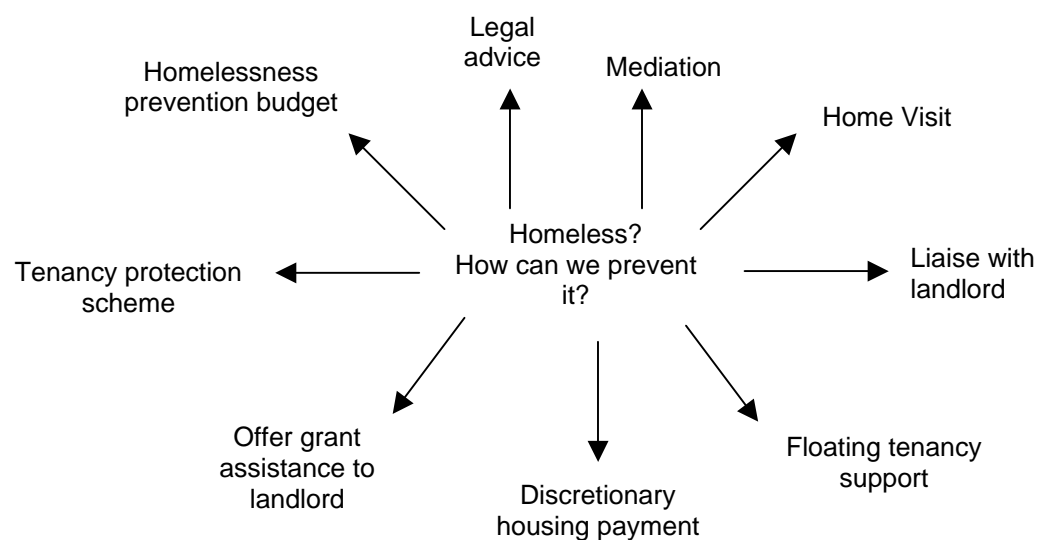
Ribble Valley Borough Council's Homeless Vision

Ribble Valley Borough Council's vision for homelessness is that every homeless case would be treated as preventable. We will respond in a supportive fashion and work with households to ensure that homelessness is prevented or that other appropriate and sustainable accommodation is found.

By 2012, Ribble Valley Borough Council aims to:

- Completely eradicate the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for all homeless households

- Sustain our levels of homelessness presentations and acceptances;

- Continue to ensure that homelessness is prevented wherever possible and to prevent reoccurring;

- Reduce the length of time in temporary accommodation to an average of 7 weeks;

- Meet our corporate ambition of delivering 50 affordable homes per year.
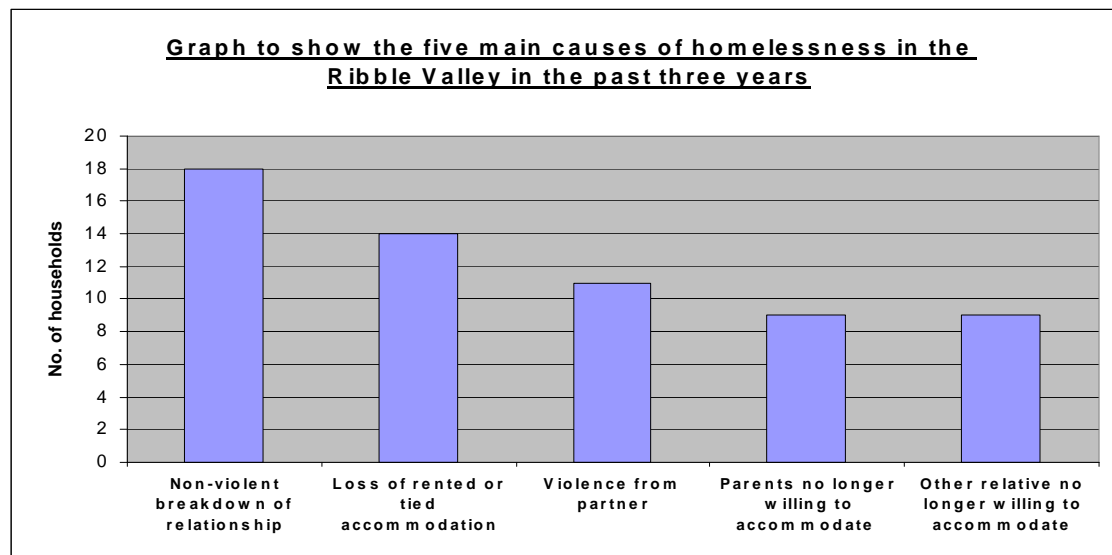
All of the actions contained within the Strategy sit under one of the above strategic priorities. The Strategy is broken down into four key areas detailing current performance in gaps in service against each strategic priority heading. Under each heading actions are detailed which will meet the identified gap. Whilst actions are identified throughout the Strategy, under each section a more detailed structure plan can be found at the end of the document that pulls together all of the actions we intend to deliver over the next three years.

In order to make this Strategy a live document that actually delivers against it action plan, all actions are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound). The Action Plan will be

reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and provisions will be made to take into account new priorities and targets.

The Homelessness Prevention Form will monitor the implementation of the Strategy Action Plan. The Action Plan has been developed in consultation with the Homelessness Prevention Form and the full Strategy document will be sent to all stakeholders and the wider public for consultation prior to formal adoption of the Strategy.

REVIEW of current scale and nature of homelessness in Ribble Valley

Graph to show the five main causes of homelessness in the Ribble Valley in the past three years

Cause	No. of households
Non-violent breakdown of relationship	18
Loss of rented or tied accommodation	14
Violence from partner	11
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	9
Other relative no longer willing to accommodate	9

The graph allows us to identify where our prevention measures should be concentrated. The main cause relationship breakdown is difficult to prevent but mediation is offered in these cases. Loss of rented accommodation and raising awareness of early intervention there are many initiatives introduced to prevent this, landlords forum, floating support service. Violent relationship breakdown is the 3rd most common cause. Our domestic violence outreach team are our key partner. Parents no longer willing to accommodate last years key prevention initiative was around young people leaving home and understanding the reality of being homeless. This initiative had a significant impact and contributed to the nil number of 16/17 acceptances in 07/08 and again 10/11.

Table & Graph to show households seeking advice over the past 5 years.

Quarter	Number of households seeking advice
April – June 2006	21
July – Sept 2006	28
Oct – Dec 2006	31
Jan – March 2007	55
April – June 2007	40
July – Sept 2007	68
Oct – Dec 2007	44
Jan – March 2008	76
April – June 2008	46
Q 1 2009	66
Q 2 2009	74
Q 3 2009	74
Q 4 2009	75
Q1 2010	70
Q2 2010	80

Q3 2010	55
Q 4 2010	52

The data above demonstrates the number of households that are assisted by the housing needs service each quarter and reflects the amount prevention work undertaken in order to reduce the households that are placed in temporary accommodation. The table clearly highlights the increasing demand for the service.

At this stage a homeless application has not been taken, these are households were homelessness is seen as being preventable. Through the housing options interview it becomes evident that some households will be owed a statutory duty and therefore the advice case is converted to an application.

The following data concentrates on homelessness applications.

The age profile and household type shows the majority of homeless households are those with dependants.

Ages of accepted households	2010/2011	2007/08	2006/07	2005/06
16-24	4	4	5	12
25-44	8	8	12	24
45-59	0	2	1	2
60-64	1	0	1	0
65-74	0	0	1	0
75 & over	0	0	0	0

Household type	10/11	07/08	06/07
Single female	0		1
Single male	1		4
Couple expecting or with children	0	2	2
Lone parent expecting or with children	10	5	10 (2 male – 8 female)
Other groups	0	1	3

	April 2010-March2011	April 2007 – March 2008	April 2006-March 2007	April Marc
1.Parents no longer willing to accommodate	1		3	4
2.Other relatives no longer willing to accommodate	1	3	2	3
3.Non-violent breakdown of relationship	3	2	3	11
4.Violence a.violence from partner	2 	 1	 1	 9
b.violent breakdown associated person	0		0	0
c.racially motivated violence	0		0	0
d.other	1	1	0	0
5.Harrassment threats intimidation a. racially motivated	0 		 0	 0
b.other forms of harassment	0		0	0
6.Mortgage arrears	0		0	1
7.Rent arrears: a.Local Authority or Public Building	0 		 0	 0
b.Registered social landlord	1		0	0
c.private dwellings	1		0	0
8.Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to: a.terms of assured shorthold tenancy	1 	 2	 6	 6
b.reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy	0		2	0
9.required to leave National Asylum Support Service	0		0	0
10.Institution or care	0		0	0
11.Other	0		3	3

Reason for acceptance
Top three reasons for acceptance in the past 3 years highlighted in colour

	April 10-March2011	April 07 – March 08	April 06 - March 07	April 05 – Mar 06
1.Emergency (fire, flood)	0	0	1	0
2.Applicant whose household includes dependent children	9	11	12	25
3.Applicant is, or household includes pregnant woman	1	1	2	2
4.Aged 16/17	0	0	1	1
5.Applicant formerly in "care"	0	0	0	0
6.Old age	0	0	1	1
7.Physical disability	1	1	1	5

8.Mental illness or disability	2	0	1	2
9.Other special reason a.Drug dependency	0	0	1	0
b.Alcohol dependency	0	1	0	0
c.Former asylum seeker	0	0	0	0
d.other	0	0	0	1
10.Having been in care	0	0	0	0
11.Having served in armed forces	0	0	0	0
12.Having been in custody	0	0	0	0
13.Having fled home because of violence	0	0	0	1
14.**Total**	11	14	20	38

	10/11	07/08	06/07	05/06	04/05	03/04
Accepted	15	14	20	35	45	71
Intentionally homeless	4	6	14	20	3	2
Not priority	0	1	13	20	34	47
Not homeless	5	17	55	65	50	36
Ineligible	0	0	0	0	8	0
Total	24	38	102	140	142	156

Reduced homeless presentations by 35% between 2003/04 and 2006/07 and then by a further 65% by 07/08.Presentations have remained low since as the focus is now on prevention and avoiding taking a homeless application were it is unlikely to result in full housing acceptance.
Acceptances reduced by 37% between 2003/04 and 2004/05 and then a further 22% in 2004/05 and 2005/06 and a further 43% 2006/07 and finally a further 40% in 2007/08.

Demonstrates improved service rather than take application from every household better to provide advice and only take an application once confident their housing position cannot be resolved and will ultimately result in homelessness.

Number of households in temporary accommodation

Year	Quarter	No. of households placed in temporary accommodation	No. of households in temporary accommodation at the end of the quarter
2005/06	1 2 3 4	7 6 1 3	10 9 6 5
2006/07	1 2 3 4	3 2 4 2	6 6 7 5
2007/08	1 2 3 4	1 5 2	2 6 8
2010/2011	1 2 3 4	4 2 2 2	4 4 4 5

Year	Average length of stay	Target
05/06	8wks	
06/07	8wks	7wks
07/08	12wks	
10/11	14wks	

The average length of stay has increased in the 2 past year. Despite all the initiatives introduced to assist moving on the limited social stock and low turnover make finding secure accommodation a difficult task.The proposed change to Homeless Legislation which will enable housing authorities to offer private rented accommodation to households as a reasonable offer may assist in reducing the length of time in temporary.

Temporary Accommodation – The Current Situation in Ribble Valley

In recent years Ribble Valley has reduced its provision of temporary accommodation from 11 units down to 9 to improve the standard of accommodation. Previously Beacon Villas at Longridge provided four units of temporary accommodation. However the building was not energy efficient and therefore not appropriate for households on a low income. This accommodation was transferred to Adactus Housing Association in 2007 and renovated to provide affordable accommodation. Two Council owned self-contained general let flats now provides temporary accommodation in Longridge.

At the Joiners Arms, the temporary accommodation in Clitheroe, there are 7 units of accommodation, two fully self-contained units, three units have toilet and wash hand basins, and two units have shared bathroom facilities.

The facilities have been continually improved since 2004, and are of a good standard, the accommodation now has on-site laundry facilities, a communal meeting room, acess to IT facilities and a garden and play area. All the units were renovated in 2002 and all have fitted kitchens and laminate flooring. There is an on-site warden service every weekday.

Support is provided by Carr Gomm and they support clients in the hostel on a daily basis .

Prevention of Homelessness Against the Main Causes

Current Situation in Ribble Valley

The development of Ribble Valley's first homelessness strategy in 2003 has resulted in a transformation of what was a traditional homeless service to a forward looking housing needs service.

Since 2003/2004 there has been a significant decrease in homeless presentations and acceptances. In 2003/2004 there were 156 homeless presentations and 71 acceptances compared with 38 presentations and 14 acceptances for 2007/2008.

This is as a direct result of the introduction of the housing needs approach and focus preventative work. Since 2003 a range of preventative initiatives have been developed including mediation, home visits, tenancy protection schemes, the homeless prevention fund, improved liaison with landlords and supported housing projects, sanctuary scheme and amendments to the allocations policy.

Whilst the numbers of homeless presentations and acceptances are reducing, the number of individuals seeking advice from the housing needs service is increasing with 284 clients in 20010/2011. Best value performance indicators 213 measures the number of households who consider themselves homeless who approach the local authority housing advice service and for whom housing advice case work initiative resolve their situation. The number of prevention cases has increased significantly over the same period.

(The Sidings, supported housing)

Whilst this is a huge achievement, the homelessness strategy seeks to build upon this achievement. The homeless review has identified a number of weaknesses in the existing services and identified potential increases in homelessness in certain areas. The strategy seeks to ensure that these gaps are responded to through an effective action plan. It will also be important to safeguard the existing prevention budgets particularly the tenancy protection scheme to ensure we can respond to the ongoing demand. It will also be a key priority to ensure that housing advice is available to all the homeless households or those threatened with homelessness throughout Ribble Valley regardless of priority need.

One of the most successful preventative initiatives is the tenancy protection scheme, which has enabled 158 households into private rented accommodation since being established in 2005. It is essential to ensure that these households have access to support and advice and do not become homeless either as a result of the end of their assured shortfall tenancy or due to arrears.

The Calico Floating Support Service is crucial in ensuring that these households within the private rented sector maintain their tenancy. This is a new provision from October 2007; prior to this there was no provision to tenancy support outside the temporary accommodation. The provider is based in the Council offices one day per week and this has improved utilisation of the service.

The homelessness review identified that the main causes of homelessness in Ribble Valley is family and friends evicting. This area needs to be addressed. It will be necessary to identify the real reasons for these evictions in order to be able to respond effectively with a range of prevention mechanisms. Whilst home visits are being undertaken to establish the real reason and mediation is always offered, there is a need to develop a prevention package in partnership with a range of services specifically targeted at young people, including services such as Connexions. The package will need to include signposting and referrals to floating support, mediation, supported accommodation and identified planned moves from the family home. It is also felt that the introduction of post eviction mediation may help young people to return to the family home after a cooling off period. All this will improve relations resulting in family support where this is not possible.

Non violent relationship breakdown is the second highest cause of homelessness in the Ribble Valley. Our preventative input is somewhat limited in personal relationships. However, a new information leaflet has been produced which provides legal advice and general guidance on this matter and mediation is offered where appropriate. There is a significant reduction in the number of presentations due to this cause from 11 in 2005/2006 down to 4 in 2007/2008. Loss of assured shorthold tenancy is the third highest cause of homelessness. This cause again has seen a significant reduction from 16 in 2003/2004 down to 3 in 2010/11. There has been considerable resources introduced to initiate this reduction. The strategic housing through many different engagements with landlords providing a comprehensive private sector liaison. The grant initiatives available are a powerful communication mechanism for engaging landlords. The nomination rights attached to grants ensures we remain in regular contact with landlords and the condition that the landlords accept the tenancy protection scheme.

Other initiatives include the landlord's forum, which runs twice a year this enables networking and an opportunity for information exchange. The forum has been well attended and is a useful medium for advertising the tenancy protection scheme and other homelessness prevention initiatives. The landlords newsletter was developed by request of landlords who felt the information provided in the forum should be available to those unable to attend.

The availability of affordable private rented properties through the landlord grant scheme is another invaluable resource. Through this scheme homelessness can often be prevented removing the use of temporary accommodation for many households. Home visits are another valuable preventative measure particularly in family relationship breakdowns again reducing the use of temporary accommodation.

PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATION

Meeting the housing needs of people in the Ribble Valley is a corporate objective of the Council. This objective has been identified as one of the four key ambitions of the Authority. The importance of this cannot be over emphasised. Some key statistics for the Borough with regard to affordability include:

- Affordability has deteriorated with the ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings to being 9.8 in 2010;

- Over the 2000-2006 period prices in the housing market increased by 233%.

- Ribble Valley has the lowest proportion of social dwellings in the northwest with 7.5% a total of 1748 units in 2010. The area is projected to experience the largest increase in population in the northwest. The average house price for the whole district in 2010 was £211,026 .

- Current government guidance on assessing affordability recommends using the ratio of house price to income. A ratio of between 3 and 4 to 1 is deemed to be the upper limit of affordability. In Ribble Valley no single ward falls into this range. In 2010 the ratio is 9.8 to 1.

This affordability issue has a massive impact on all aspects of the homelessness service and
is at the root of all obstacles in homelessness prevention. Affordability has always been a key barrier in Ribble Valley. However, since 2002 the situation has increasingly become an unavoidable aspect of every presentation and housing advice case taken.

The actions taken to address the problem have been wide spread and many have been achieved corporately:

- Housing strategy delivery plan: the main focus is delivering affordable housing;

- The Council set a target of delivering 50 affordable homes per year;

- The Council approved a Affordable Housing Memorandum of Understanding to secure 30% affordable housing on all developments.

- There is a Ribble Valley affordable housing development protocol, which assists developers at every stage in the process to encourage applications.

- Ribble Valley set a planning moratorium in 2002 which permitted affordable housing developments only;

- The Council invests over £120,000 of capital funding every year for development of private rented sector properties;

- The Council has undertaken housing needs surveys across over 90% of the Borough to clearly identify the type, tenure and size of housing required;

- In 2005 a Tenancy Protection Scheme was established with a bond covering up to £800 to ensure landlords will accept the proposal;

- In 2007 the Council secured commitment of the development of 60 affordable homes with the transfer authority of Ribble Valley Homes.

The landlord/tenant grants available to landlords to renovate private rented property to a high standard is an initiative that has been fundamental in achieving a reduction in the length of time families stay in temporary accommodation. The scheme has gradually evolved into the initiative we have today but has existed for over ten years.

Landlords are offered grant aid of up to £10,000 per flat and £15,000 for a house. This is a 50% contribution towards renovation costs and is, therefore, match funded. In exchange for the grant the conditions are that the property must be let for up to five years, that the landlord must accept nominations and the rent level is set in line with local housing allowance.

As of April 2008 there are 46 private rented properties that the Local Authority has nomination rights to through the scheme. As properties become available householders in temporary accommodation are first to be considered for these properties.

The reduction of the local housing allowance has become another serious hurdle in tackling affordability. Under the scheme Ribble Valley is the third most affected Local Authority nationally. Almost 60% of all claimants of housing benefits in the Ribble Valley saw a reduction in their entitlements with the introduction of a local housing allowance. This is a disincentive for landlords to accept tenants in receipt of benefits or to invest in rental properties in the Borough, coupled with the removal of direct payments to landlords.

To counter balance the effects of this the grant available for each unit through the landlord/tenant grant was increased and no longer available in Longridge where the local housing allowance has been increased. Ribble Valley is split into four areas under the local housing allowance and the central Lancashire allowance, which incorporates Longridge, has seen an increase.

HOUSING DEMAND AND SUPPLY

On 1st April 2007 there were 856 households on the housing register. The table below uses information from the HSSA to compare demand for social housing in Ribble Valley with adjacent authorities.

Demand for Social Housing

	Social Housing stock	New Social Lettings	Annual turnover of social housing %	Vacant Social Properties	Vacancy Rate
Blackburn with Darwen UA	11546	1438	12.5%	273	2.4%
Burnley	5866	890	15.2%	109	1.9%
Craven	2237	192	8.6%	34	1.5%
Hyndburn	4829	778	16.1%	207	4.3%
Lancaster	6158	624	10.1%	113	1.8%
Pendle	4446	863	19.4%	76	1.7%
Preston	11451	2227	19.4%	705	6.2%
Ribble Valley	**1683**	**122**	**7.2%**	**12**	**0.7%**
Rossendale	4695	629	13.4%	90	1.9%
South Ribble	4966	547	11.0%	38	0.8%
Wyre	3520	355	10.1%	44	1.3%

Source: HSSA 2007

It is clear that there is significant demand for social rented housing in Ribble Valley, with severe pressure on the available stock. While there are potentially 1,683 units available, the number of new lettings shows that turnover is low, restricting the supply of available properties for homeless households. At the same time, only 19 x 2beds and 13 x 3 beds social rented properties were vacant in April 2010 (0.7% of the available stock), demonstrating an extremely tight market.

Establishing the level of Housing Need

As part of the Housing Market Assessment undertaken by Ecotec in July 2008, a calculation was undertaken in line with current DCLG guidance to establish the level of need for affordable housing

Stage 1 – Current Housing Need		Households
<u>A</u>	Households wishing to move over next 5 years	4,578
B	Moving households unable to afford market housing	20%
C	Total current housing need (AxD)	924
D	Of which current occupiers of affordable housing	87
E	Backlog need (C-D)	837

The next stage is to calculate the likely level of newly arising need over the next few years. This uses the number of people wishing to start their own households, based on the housing need surveys. Incidentally, the figure of 440 is consistent with current household projections, which suggest an average of 400 additional households per year for Ribble Valley between 2006 and 2011. The same process as above is then followed to work out how many of these households could afford market housing. This is added to the number of households falling into need each year, based on the number of enquiries to Ribble Valley's housing service who were in danger of becoming homeless. This leaves a newly-arising need for 172 affordable rented units per year.

Stage 2 – Newly Arising Need		Households
F	Gross new HH formation per annum	440
G	Share newly forming HH unable to afford market housing	19%
H	Newly forming HH unable to afford market housing (FxG)	85
I	Existing households falling into need	87
J	Total newly arising need (H+I)	172

This is then related to the amount of social housing available, using the average number of new social lettings per year.

Stage 2 – Newly Arising Need	Households

K	Annual supply of social sector re-lets (minus internal transfers)	76

The final stage is to bring all this evidence together. This calculates that the outstanding need for affordable or social rented housing is for an additional 264 units per year across the borough. This is based on reducing the existing backlog to zero over five years, meeting any newly arising need and taking the number of available units into account.

Bringing the Evidence Together		Households
L	Backlog need	837
M	Annual quota of backlog reduction (E÷5)	167
N	Total newly arising housing need	172
O	Annual supply of social sector re-lets	76
P	Net annual housing need (M+N-O)	264

This final figure of should be seen in conjunction with the information on demand for the existing affordable housing stock as giving a powerful indication of the level of local demand for affordable rented housing.

Key Findings of the Housing Market Assessment 2008

- There is a clear shortage of good quality affordable housing, especially for social rent. Waiting lists are high and properties are in short supply, with low turnover and very low numbers of empty properties. The true number of households in need may be greater than the waiting list total of 856, as people may not register for social housing if they feel there is very little chance of being successful.

- Housing need analysis of the type specified in current DCLG guidance suggests a shortfall of 264 affordable rented units per year. While this is unlikely to be a realistic target for the provision of social rented homes, this highlights a clear and pressing need for more of this type of housing.

- Parish housing need surveys give an indication of the types and sizes of housing most urgently required, and where the greatest aggregate demand for housing is likely to be. In addition, the analysis of housing affordability at market entry level by ward shows where affordable housing should be prioritised above market housing.

- According to the need surveys, most households requiring alternative accommodation are looking to form a new, independent household or require cheaper or smaller accommodation.

- Most households express a preference for houses or for units with two bedrooms, although looking solely at new social rents shows that flats and smaller units have fewer unsuccessful offers and are vacant for shorter periods between lettings. This is likely to be a result of the lack of specific types of housing or of the fact that smaller units form the majority of the available supply of social rented properties.

- Analysing the accessibility of owner occupation for households at different income levels suggests that households earning between £15,000 and £30,000 per annum experience the greatest shortfalls. A greater supply of private rented housing or intermediate products such as shared ownership can play a role in housing these groups. There is a much greater level of interest in different types of intermediate product such as discounted market housing and low cost home ownership.

Future Timetable for homelessness strategy

The strategy will remain an active document and guide for the housing needs service .The regular quarterly meeting of the prevention forum ensures progress is monitored and the action plan is a measure of performance.

Reporting to the Housing Forum annually and Heath and Housing Committee will ensure actions and expenditure for the service remain accountable.

HOUSING ADVICE, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Improve documentation/written advice given at initial interview	Develop specific advice leaflets for each client group including B&ME translation	New leaflet developed March 2011. New interview sheet used Jan 2011	Within existing resources	Steering Group Housing Needs Officer
Develop good communication with all relevant organisations	Review HLN forum attendees, ensure all agencies are represented	Updated March 2011	Within existing resources	Steering Group Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership
Maintain accurate HLN database to track all homeless households	Utilise database ensure continual update	Monitored quarterly	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer IT Section Housing Needs Officer
Collate information on all relevant HLN services in Ribble Valley and neighbouring authorities	Produce service directory for Ribble Valley	Jan 2009 Information contained within new leaflet	Within existing resources	Housing Needs Officer Housing Strategy Officer
Ensure up to date and relevant HLN information is accessible	Update and maintain housing section information on the Ribble Valley website and front line staff have basic housing rights knowledge	Monitored quarterly	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer Housing Admin Officer
Provide support to all households where housing is insecure	Refer all potential homelessness households to Calico	Implemented October 2007 Monitored quarterly	Supporting People funding	Calico Supporting People RV Housing Needs
Improve communication with clients	Use text messages/email where client prefers	Aug 2008 Currently used	Within existing resources	Housing Needs Officer Housing Admin Officer
Advice available to all households on request during working hours	Ensure an officer is available at all times	Aug 2008 Currently available	Training costs for staff	Housing Needs Officer Housing Officer Housing Admin Officer

Ensure BME households are offered translation services	Agreement with Burnley language line established	June 2008	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer
Raise awareness of all housing services across the borough	Develop general housing advice sheet and utilise mobile unit Stan the Van	Sept 2011	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer Mobile Unit RSL's Stan the Van
Identify HLN champion with each RSL in the borough	Contact each RSL RSL at the Housing Forum	March 2011	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer RSL's
Establish a baseline of satisfaction and identify where improvements can be developed	Undertake customer satisfaction research	Oct 2011	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer Carr Gomm Ribble Valley Homes

PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS

INITIATIVE	ACTION	DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	PARTNERS
Reduce number of homeless acceptances to parental eviction by 10%	Raise awareness and educate young people about homelessness prevention. Consider re-running prevention programme across East Lancashire	March 2009	Utilise homelessness prevention monies	HLN Steering group Shelter Lancs Education Authority
Utilise discretionary housing benefit (DHB) payments to prevent homelessness.	Advise and support households to make discretionary housing payment claims	Monitored annually	Utilise DHP monies £5,000 per year.	Housing Benefits Housing Strategy Officer
Maximise the use of 'Spend to Save' Policy across the homelessness service	Consider all available funding streams which may prevent homelessness at each interview	To be monitored	Homelessness directorate funding. Grant budget.	Housing Committee Housing Strategy Officer
	Improve communications link with housing benefits section and improve flexibility when dealing with vulnerable households	Ongoing	Within existing resources.	Housing Strategy Officer Housing Benefits Manager
Raise awareness of the importance of early intervention	Inform all private landlords of availability of floating support.	Sept 2011	Within existing resources	Landlords Forum Group Housing Needs Officer Calico Communication Officer
Prevent homelessness through loss of RSL tenancy	Ensure early warning system in place with each RSL in the borough	Sept 2011	Within existing resources	RSL's Housing Strategy Officer

INITIATIVE	ACTION	DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	PARTNERS
Ensure service users are satisfied with current level of service	Consult with service users as to the standard of service received-through completion of a survey	Oct 2011	Within existing resources	Carr Gomm Housing Strategy Officer Hostel Manager
Update list of all temporary and permanent housing providers in the borough	Produce a leaflet and distribute to all service providers	March 2011 New leaflet incorporates this	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer Housing Needs Officer
Annually undertake a full review of the homeless strategy	Utilise HLN forum to consult with all service providers	January 2012	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer HLN Steering Group
Maintain steering group to regularly monitor performance of initiatives	Meet twice a year to review progress and update the action plan	March 2011	Within existing resources	Steering Group
Prevent homelessness precipitated by health issues	Develop joint working protocols for hospital discharge.	January 2012	£2.5k from homelessness prevention budget	Pennine Lancashire Health and Homelessness (completed March 2011) Development Project and Mental Health Project
	Improve referral pathways between agencies to enable access to supported accommodation	January 2012		

PROVISION OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

INITIATIVE	ACTION	DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	PARTNERS
Improve standard of accommodation and available services at Bleasdale Court, Longridge	Liaise with Ribble Valley Homes as to planned improvement programme for units at Longridge. TA unit not fixed to be able to access	January 2009	Financial implications lie with Ribble Valley Homes.	RVH Housing Needs Officer Housing Strategy Officer
Develop links with Child Action North West nightstop scheme	Invite scheme manager to homelessness forum	January 2011	Within existing resources	Child Action Northwest Homelessness Forum
Utilise specialised schemes outside borough	Improve communications with out of borough schemes	January 2012 - achieved through working with East Lancs HLN group	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer Housing Needs Officer
Maintain close working relationship with RVH	Organise monthly meeting with a standard agenda item of temporary accommodation	January 2012 – meetings maintained since transfer	Within existing resources	RVH Housing Needs Officer Housing Officer Strategic Housing Officer
Improve access to work for households in temporary accommodation	Provide IT access at the hostel in Clitheroe	Completed	Using ODPM monies	IT Section Housing Strategy Officer
	Work with Job Centre and Connexions to provide IT support for completion of job applications on line	Completed	Within existing resources	Job Centre Connexions Housing Strategy Officer
Reduce length of time spent in temporary accommodation	Convert 2 units of temporary accommodation into self contained	March 2012	Utilising ODPM funding	RVH Housing Strategy Officer
Reduce the length of time spent in temporary accommodation	Ensure all housing options considered and maximised for every household. Weekly updates on each household with support worker.	March 2012	Within existing resources	Carr Gomm Housing Officer

INITIATIVE	ACTION	DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	PARTNERS
Ensure that all children from homeless households receive necessary health check	Refer all children from homeless households to a Health Visitor	January 2006-achieved	PCT funding.	Housing Strategy Officer Health Centre Ribble Valley PCT
Utilise new garden room at hostel	Contact suitable organisations, with view to regular use of room.	August 2012	Within existing resources	Homestart LCC Adult Education Carr Gomm Inward House
Improve services for households with mental health needs	Provide housing and mental health officer across East Lancs	April 2010	Funded by all East Lancs Authorities	Mental Team Manager Housing Strategy Officer East Lancs Authorities
		January 2007-achieved 10 units of supported accommodation to be occupied Feb 2007	Housing Corp funding Housing Association investment	

ACCESS TO PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION

INITIATIVE	ACTION	DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	PARTNERS
Prevent the loss of any social housing available for homeless households	Secure the maximum amount of social rent through Section 106 Agreements Prevention conversions of social rent where possible	Ongoing through regular market engagement	Development dependent	Housing Strategy Officer Registered Social Landlords
Increase the amount of private rented affordable housing available for homeless households	Work with private developers to encourage affordable developments	Ongoing Budget approved for 2011-2012	Landlord/tenant grant funded	Private Developers Planning Strategic housing
Set affordable secure rent levels and nomination rights	Increase grant available to encourage landlords to invest in private rented sector	Budget approved 2011-2012	Private sector grant budget	Housing Strategy Officer Health & Housing Committee
	Identify the need for affordable housing in rural areas by carrying out housing needs surveys	90% achieved but ongoing problem	Within existing resources	Housing Officer Parish Councils
Maintain Tenancy Protection Scheme	Annually top up the scheme and ensure maximum number of households benefit and can access the private rented sector	Total number of TPs released 166		Housing Needs Manager Housing Strategy Officer
Maintain the number of affordable private rented properties available for homeless households.	Maintain the funding available for landlord tenant grants in 2011/2012		Annual budget of 100k transferred into landlord tenant budget	Housing Strategy Officer Health & Housing Committee

INITIATIVE	ACTION	DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	PARTNERS
Negotiate the min % of social housing to be allocated to homeless households	Establish the current nominations levels to homelessness. Engage with all RSL's and agree % of nominations	January 2012	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer RSL's
Ensure all partners informed of level of need in borough	Establish an RSL forum	Jan 2009 - established	Within existing resources	Chair of Health & Housing Housing Strategy Officer RSL's