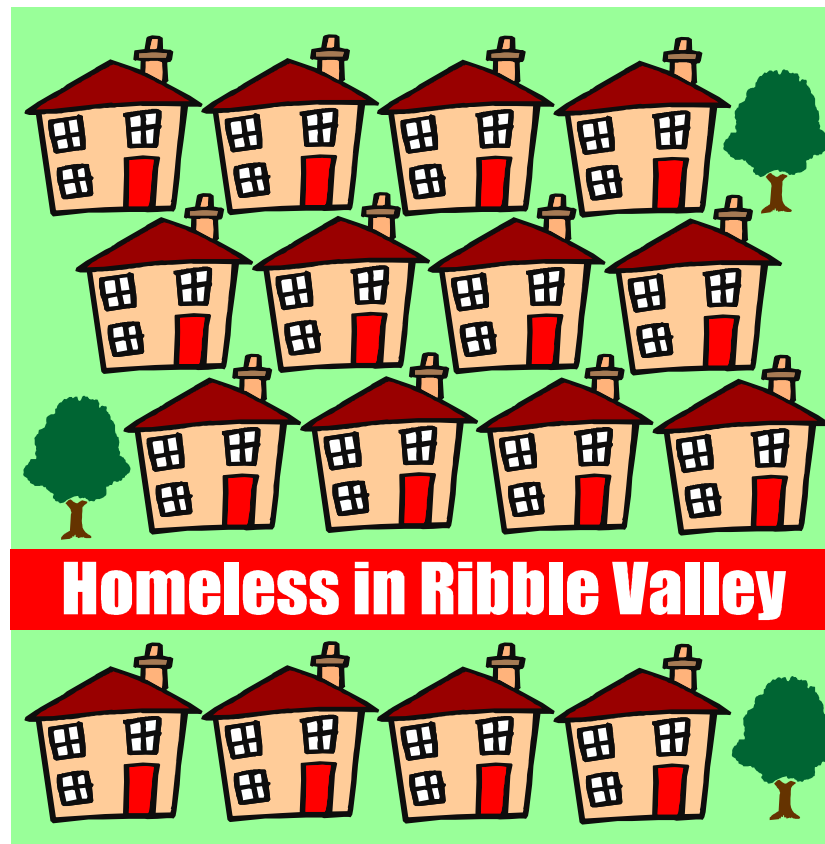


Housing Associations contd.

St Vincent's Housing Association	01282 611088
Lancashire Heritage	01282 661738
Space	0161 737 5276
Contour Homes	01772 704713
Manchester Methodist Housing Association	01204 365711
New Progress Housing Association	01200 444290



BOROUGH COUNCIL



RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Housing Department
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices, Church Walk
Clitheroe, Lancashire
BB7 2RA

Tel: 01200 414567
Fax: 01200 414488
Email: housing@ribblevalley.gov.uk

April 2008

I am going to be homeless

If you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, contact the Housing Needs Section at the Council to see how we can help you. If you are not entitled to this help but you want information about other housing options please call in and discuss these at the Council or call Shelter or the Citizens Advice Bureau. Telephone numbers on the back page.

If you are about to be made homeless get advice as soon as you can before leaving your home if possible. There is a list of useful organisations at the end of this guide. Getting advice may help you keep your home if you are behind with your rent mortgage or if you have been told to leave. Make an appointment at the Council so you can have your rights as a homeless person explained.

What will happen if I apply?

If you can show you are homeless within the legal definition 'eligible for assistance' and in priority need, the Council must immediately find you somewhere to stay whilst it looks into your situation and then find somewhere for you to live longer term if the Council decides you did not deliberately make yourself homeless.

If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance but not in priority need and/or intentionally homeless, the Council must assess your housing needs before giving you advice and assistance to help to find you somewhere to live.

Applying as homeless

To apply as homeless contact the Housing Needs Section at the Council offices. Ask for the Housing Needs Officer. It is important you make it clear that you are homeless or soon will be. It may help to take a friend or advisor with you to the Council for support. You should also take along any identification you have. Proof of your income and if you have one, proof of your tenancy agreement.

If the Council offices are closed an emergency call out service is available on 01200 444488. If you feel you need help with this you

Useful Telephone Numbers

Ribble Valley Borough Council, Main Switchboard	01200 425111
Housing Needs Officer	01200 414567
Private Sector Housing Advice	01200 414567
Citizens' Advice Bureau	01200 428966
Shelter 24 Hour Housing Help Line	0808 800 4444
Welfare Rights	01254 301141
Domestic Violence Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Outreach Project	01254 879855
Social Services	01200 425146
Youth and Community Service Clitheroe	01254 824544
Longridge	01772 782909
Ribble Valley Council for Voluntary Service	01200 422995
Call Centre Out of Hours	01200 444448
SMILE Mediation Service	01282 436989
Calico Floating Support	0800 169 2407
Connexions	01200 444799
Child Action North West	01254 244592

Emergency Accommodation/Hostels

Nightsafe, Blackburn	01254 587687
Fox Street, Preston	01772 882859
Preston Nightstop	01772 788775
Hyndburn Christian Stable	01254 389157
Leyland SLEAP Project	01772 623603
Merriweather Home	01772 253480
Salvation Army, Blackburn	01254 677338
Twin Valley Homes Hostel	01254 774626
Ribble Valley Homes	01200 444290 0800 111 4448

e-mail – housing@ribblevalley.gov.uk

Housing Associations

Accent North West	01282 457825
Harvest Housing Group	0845 3450272
Places For People	01254 688301
Housing 21	01274 744190
Sanctuary Housing Association	0845 757 3263

for general maintenance and house-keeping issues.

Settled Accommodation

As long as there are no problems in the temporary accommodation there is no limit to the amount of time you can stay. You should normally stay until the Council offers you either:

- an offer of an assured tenancy with a private rented landlord or housing association; or
- an offer of an assured short hold tenancy with a private rented landlord.

The settled accommodation has to be suitable for you and the Council may have to provide somewhere else if it isn't.

Get advice before you make a decision whether to accept or refuse any settled accommodation offered to you.

If you move out of the temporary accommodation before you have been offered another property, or are evicted from the temporary accommodation, then the Council will no longer have a duty to help you.

I disagree with the Council's decision

If the Council has made a decision you disagree with, for example it says you are intentionally homeless, you can ask the Council to review it. You must make this request within 21 days from when you are told of its decision. You can only make a request later than 21 days if you have a good reason for not doing so earlier.

If you disagree with the Council's view of its decision you may be able to appeal to the County Court. You must do this within 21 days of when you are told of the outcome of the review. You can also appeal to the County Court if the Council does not make a decision within eight weeks. You can ask the Council to provide temporary accommodation until the appeal is heard.

You should seek advice to help you with a review or appeal to the County Court.

can contact Shelter on 0808 8004444 for assistance. It is a free 24-hour service.

Applying as a homeless person is not the same as being on the waiting list for social housing. You may want to apply to join these waiting lists as well so you have a better chance of getting permanent accommodation. Ask the Council about its waiting list and other affordable schemes it has.

Who can apply?

If you are homeless or likely to become homeless during the next four weeks the Council must allow you to apply. The Council only have to help you if you are eligible for assistance. People who are not likely to be eligible for assistance are people from abroad with limits to their rights to stay in the country and people seeking asylum.

What must the Council do?

The Housing Needs Officer will firstly look at preventing you from becoming homeless. They will offer:

- Mediation where appropriate
- A home visit
- To contact your landlord

Depending on your circumstances, every effort will be made to prevent homelessness which may involve other agencies.

The Council has a legal responsibility to help people who are or are soon to be homeless. How much help we give you depends on your situation. In the meantime we may have to provide you with somewhere to live. Sometimes the Council will make the decision on the same day as you apply.

First the Council check three things.

1. That you are soon to become homeless.
2. That you are eligible for assistance.
3. That you are in one of the priority need groups.

These terms have legal meanings which are explained below. The Council will ask for details about your situation so take any

important papers with you such as a court eviction order, notice from your landlord or your rent book.

If there is reason to think you might be homeless and eligible for assistance and in priority need you must be given temporary accommodation immediately while the Council looks into your situation.

Make sure the information you give the Council is correct if you can and if you aren't sure, say so. Giving false information is a criminal offence.

Am I legally homeless?

The legal definition of homelessness covers more than being out on the streets. You should be considered homeless if:

- You have nowhere to live in the United Kingdom.
- You cannot stay in your home because of violence or threats of violence.
- You have nowhere you can live together with your family or anyone else who lives or could be easily be expected to live with you, for example your children, partner or a carer.
- You do not have permission to stay where you are, for example you are a squatter.
- You have been locked out of your home and are not allowed back.
- Your home is a boat, mobile home or caravan and there is nowhere you are allowed to put it.
- You have somewhere to live but it is not reasonable for you to stay there. This may be because of violence, abuse, harassment or threats or because of serious overcrowding or bad conditions, or because you cannot afford your housing costs.

You can also apply to the Council if you are likely to become homeless within the next 28 days. This includes:

- Need to live in the area for some other reason, such as to avoid moving your children to another school or to be near a particular hospital.

Make sure that you inform the Council of any special reason why you need to live in its area.

I don't have a local connection

You have the right to have a homeless application assessed by any Council whether or not you have a local connection with the area. The Council will not send you away because you have no local ties. However, once your application has been assessed the Council may decide that a different Council should take responsibility.

If you've got ties with a different area

If a Council decides that you are homeless and eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless but do not have a local connection with its area, it can ask another Council to help you. There are special steps which must be taken when one Council is to ask another to house you.

How must the Council help?

If the Council decide you are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and are not intentionally homeless and it isn't referring you to another Council, then the Council will immediately provide you with accommodation. Depending on where you live the Council will offer one of its two hostels or, in the event that is not appropriate, then bed and breakfast accommodation may be offered. You may have to stay in this accommodation for a long time before you are offered settled accommodation.

Hostel Accommodation

The Council has a hostel in Clitheroe and one in Longridge. Depending on your situation, you may be offered a fully self-contained flat, or a flat with shared facilities. The hostel has recently been renovated to a high standard and we expect you to abide by house rules if you are offered a place. Once in the hostel, the Council will look to find you settled accommodation and you will be expected to assist with this. Whilst in the hostel, support will be offered by an agency called Carr Gomm. There is a Warden

another Council to help, you must ask why. If the Council says you are intentionally homeless then see below.

Am I intentionally homeless

The Council may decide that you made yourself homeless. If it believes that:

- You chose to leave the home which you could have stayed in.
- It was your fault you lost your home.
- You arranged to be made homeless to take advantage of the system.

If the Council says that you are intentionally homeless and you disagree with this, then get advice.

If the Council says you are intentionally homeless and you are in priority need, it must still house you temporarily. If you have children the Council's Housing Department must ask you if you would like Social Services to help you. If you agree it must tell Social Services your situation. Social Services may help you find somewhere to live. They may help to pay for your accommodation for a short time while you look for somewhere to live.

What is a local connection

If the Council decides you are homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need and not intentionally homeless, then it will usually look to see if you have a local connection in its area. If you have, then the Council will find you somewhere to live. You have a local connection with an area if you:

- Live or have lived in the area for some time, usually at least six months.
- Have a job in the area.
- Have a close relative, for example, parent, adult, child, brother or sister you wish to be near.

- Where you have been taken to court by your landlord.
- You have been living with friends or relatives and they have asked you to leave within the next 28 days.

If you have more than four weeks before you have to leave where you are living, you should still contact the Council and get advice. If you are leaving care, hospital or prison or the armed forces, you may be in a priority group. You should also ask your personal advisor, social worker or probation officer to help you apply to the Council.

Am I in priority need?

You are in priority need if:

- You are responsible for dependent children.
- You or someone with you is pregnant.
- You are homeless as a result of flood, fire or other disaster.
- You are vulnerable.

You are also in priority need if

- You are between 16-17 years old unless Social Services has a responsibility for you.
- You are 18-20 and used to be in care.

Vulnerable people

When deciding if you are vulnerable the Council should look at whether your personal circumstances make it particularly difficult for you to find and keep accommodation. For example the Council decide you are vulnerable because:

- You or someone with you is an older person.
- You or someone with you has a physical, mental illness or disability.

- You have been in care and are over 20.
- You or someone with you is vulnerable for another special reason or you have been in the armed forces, prison or custody or detention in the past.
- You can no longer stay in your home because someone has been violent or abusive towards you or threatened you with violence.

It may help if a doctor, social worker, health visitor or probation officer supports your application. Take any medical advice you have to the Council.

Children

If your relationship has broken down and your children live with you, then they will continue to be able to. If your children cannot live with you but would do if it were not for your housing problem, you may be considered in priority need. If your children are in care because of your housing problems, you may still be in priority need.

16-17 year olds

You are in priority need if you are aged 16 or 17 unless you are in the exception below.

If you are homeless because you left home the Council may check whether there is a possibility of reconciliation with your family. They cannot make you return to a family home particularly if it is not safe for you to do so. You are not in priority need when you are 16 or 17 if Social Services have got a responsibility for you. Social Services will be responsible for you if:

- You are a relevant child. This means you that at some time from the age of 14 you were looked after by Social Services for at least 13 weeks or more.
- Social Services say you are a child in need to whom it has to provide accommodation.

Careleavers

The housing department has a responsibility towards young people between 18-20 if:

- After the age of 16 they have lived in a hostel or voluntary housing scheme.
- You have been in residential care.
- You have been in foster care.
- You have been housed by Social Services.

What happens after I apply?

If you are homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need, the Council will have to check:

- That you are not intentionally homeless.
- Whether you have a local connection.

The Council must make sure that you have somewhere to live whilst it makes the enquiries. This is likely to be one of the Council's hostels in either Longridge or Clitheroe. If what you are offered is unsuitable, you should tell the Council why. If you wish to remain with friends or relatives instead of moving into the hostel, then you may receive homeless at home points and therefore will not be penalized for doing this.

Paying for short term accommodation

You will have to pay towards the cost of short-term accommodation that the Council provides. The charges are reasonable and if you are on benefits or low income, you will be able to claim housing benefits to pay for the accommodation.

The Council won't pay

The Council has a duty to consider all applications properly. Make a note of the person you speak to and if you are not happy ask to speak to a more senior person.

If the Council decides it isn't going to help you or isn't going to ask