



Ribble Valley
Borough Council

www.ribblevalley.gov.uk

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2022-2025



September 2022

SUMMARY

This strategy has been written at the end of the global COVID -19 pandemic which required a housing response very different to the statutory function of the Council. Every aspect of the housing sector was hit particularly hard, and the government responded with various measures to alleviate the negative consequences of the crisis.

This is Ribble Valley's 6th 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 the factors which could affect future levels upon the district;
- an audit and mapping of homelessness services within the Borough, looking at the various provisions 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.

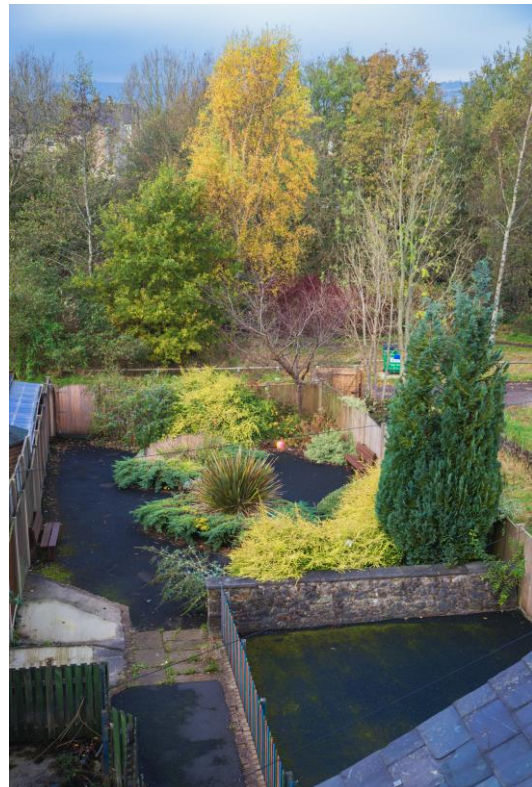
Partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors have been consulted via the housing and homelessness forums. These stakeholders, including service users represent a wide range of agencies working with both priority and none-priority homeless groups.

Regular consultations with stakeholders, partners and most importantly service users are vital to success of the strategy. The Strategy will cover a three-year period 2022 to 2025, 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 make sure targets are being met.

Introduction to the Homelessness Strategy

Ribble Valley places a high priority on tackling and responding to homelessness wherever the case is viewed as potentially preventable. The Council retained the homelessness duty in house and housing advice functions have remained with the Council. However Onward Homes continue to be a key partner delivering the homelessness service in that they are commissioned to manage the 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 Registered Providers, Support Providers, LCC Social Services and 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.

In summary the Homelessness Strategy:

- 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; and
- 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 latest figure for 2021 shows the borough has a population of around 60,057 with Clitheroe, the main administrative centre having 16,279 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 8324. 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.

It is estimated that between 2014-2039 the population of the borough will increase by 5.4% which is higher than the 4.4% predicted for Lancashire. By 2039 the population aged 65 or over in Ribble Valley is projected to increase to 20,100.

Ribble Valley is a relatively affluent area and is ranked in the top 50 least deprived English districts in the Index of Deprivation. By far the best ranking in Lancashire. However, six wards within the borough fall within the worst 10% of all English wards under the Access to Housing 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 median house price to earnings ratio for Ribble Valley is the highest of the 14 Lancashire Authorities. The district has the highest proportion of housing stock in council tax bands E and above in Lancashire.

There is a low number of employment and support allowance claimants and housing benefit claimant number are low.

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.

Within the Housing Strategy delivery plan 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.



National Context

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced on 3rd April 2018. The HRA saw the biggest change in legislation affecting homelessness services since the Housing Act 1996.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) was implemented on 3 April 2018, and the act puts duties on local housing authorities to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness at an early stage regardless of whether the households is considered in priority need. As well as ‘upstreaming’ homelessness prevention, the HRA seeks to ensure all households are adequately assisted when they first contact services dealing with homelessness, as the assistance greatly varied between local authorities especially for non-priority households. The changes due to the HRA are summarised as follows:

- The threatened with homelessness period applies for 56 days, increased from 28 days, and includes valid s.21 notices with 56 day or less remaining.
- All households will receive written advice tailored to their circumstances, all households (if eligible) will have their case assessed and be given a Personalised Housing Plan.
- There is prevention duty for 56 days to assist all households threatened with homelessness, there is a relief duty for 56 days for all households who are homeless.

- Under prevention and relief duties the Council must 'help to secure' accommodation that is suitable, duties can be ended if the applicant refuses to cooperate.
- The applicant is able to ask for a review of decisions made relating to new duties under the HRA, from October 2018 other public authorities (eg health services, social care, offender related) have a duty to refer to the local housing authority.
- Care leavers are awarded a local connection to the local housing authority in which they receive care as well as the social services authority that provides care.

From a practical point of view the HRA means providing homelessness related services is more resource intensive and has increased the amount of time spent with each customer to fully assess needs, produce the Personalised Housing Plan (PHP), track progress of the PHP, and report quarterly to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Since the HRA has been implemented the number of households approaching the Council has also increased over 50% locally. New software systems were needed for all local housing authorities to record and report the increased amount of information on applicants required by the MHCLG.

The HRA allows prevention and relief duties to be discharged by helping to secure a 6 month Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) in the Private Rented Sector (PRS). The accommodation secured must meet Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012, and this allows more scope for local housing authorities to utilise the PRS. If an applicant doesn't follow their PHP and displays a deliberate and unreasonable refusal to cooperate it is possible to discharge prevention and or relief duties.

Whilst the HRA aims to treat all households the same from the outset, regardless of priority need, there is only a duty to house applicants in temporary accommodation (TA) under the relief duty if there is reason to believe a household is vulnerable due to being in priority need. A household which is considered to be in priority need must be accommodated for the 56 days.

Of the above changes, Universal Credit (UC) would mean direct payments to claimants, even tenants in social housing, and this this is seen as a major risk by housing associations. The delays in payment after claiming UC, and uncertainty of claim also make it less attractive to landlords and mean it is more challenging to find rented accommodation for UC claimants.

The **Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016** was a follow up to the Summer and Autumn Statements in 2015 and had a focus on increasing employment whilst reducing the welfare budget.

The LHA Cap to the amount of benefit paid to households in social housing had a significant impact on the delivery of new Supported Housing and 1 bedroom general needs social housing, and made it more difficult for under 35 year old single people to find accommodation. This was a key issue in Ribble Valley as already limited housing options for young low income earners was further reduced.

Covid Pandemic

Across the country, there has been a continued new flow of people experiencing homelessness since the start of the pandemic.

During the first few months of the pandemic, the increase was driven by those already experiencing homelessness - people who were sofa surfing and living in transient accommodation. Towards the second wave of the pandemic, there have been bigger

increases from people who are experiencing homelessness for the first time, people who have been furloughed and those who are newly unemployed.

Homelessness among people with No Recourse to Public Funds has been a continued issue throughout the whole of the pandemic. The instruction to local authorities to support everyone who was rough sleeping or in accommodation where they could not self-isolate into safe emergency accommodation meant that all local authorities reported an increase in support being provided for people with No Recourse to Public Funds including EEA nationals without entitlements to benefits. In some cases, local authorities reported accommodating quite significant numbers of individuals but with an awareness that the support they were able to offer, beyond emergency accommodation was limited.

The most significant intervention that governments across all three nations made was the instruction to bring 'Everyone In' or provide emergency accommodation for everyone rough sleeping, at risk of rough sleeping, or in accommodation where they could not self-isolate throughout the pandemic. This was an enormous undertaking for local authorities and the challenge of this was reflected on by local authorities. This intervention has clearly saved lives during the pandemic, with infection rates and deaths amongst people experiencing homelessness at extremely low levels compared internationally.

One of the biggest challenges facing local authorities is the ability to successfully move those housed in emergency COVID-19 accommodation into permanent and secure housing. The structural barriers that existed before the pandemic, including a lack of housing supply and a welfare system that does not address the underlying causes of homelessness have been exacerbated during the pandemic.

There is growing concern over funding to support a homelessness response in both the immediate and longer-term future.

There was recognition of the positive effect government policies have had on levels of homelessness during the pandemic, particularly the pause in evictions and temporary uplift in local housing allowance. However, there were concerns across all areas about the temporary nature of these changes and the impact these may have on homelessness in the future. Local authorities across each nation were concerned about the newly emerging need for their services as they started to see the impacts of the wider economic context and the cumulation of rent arrears in their local area.

Sub-Regional Context

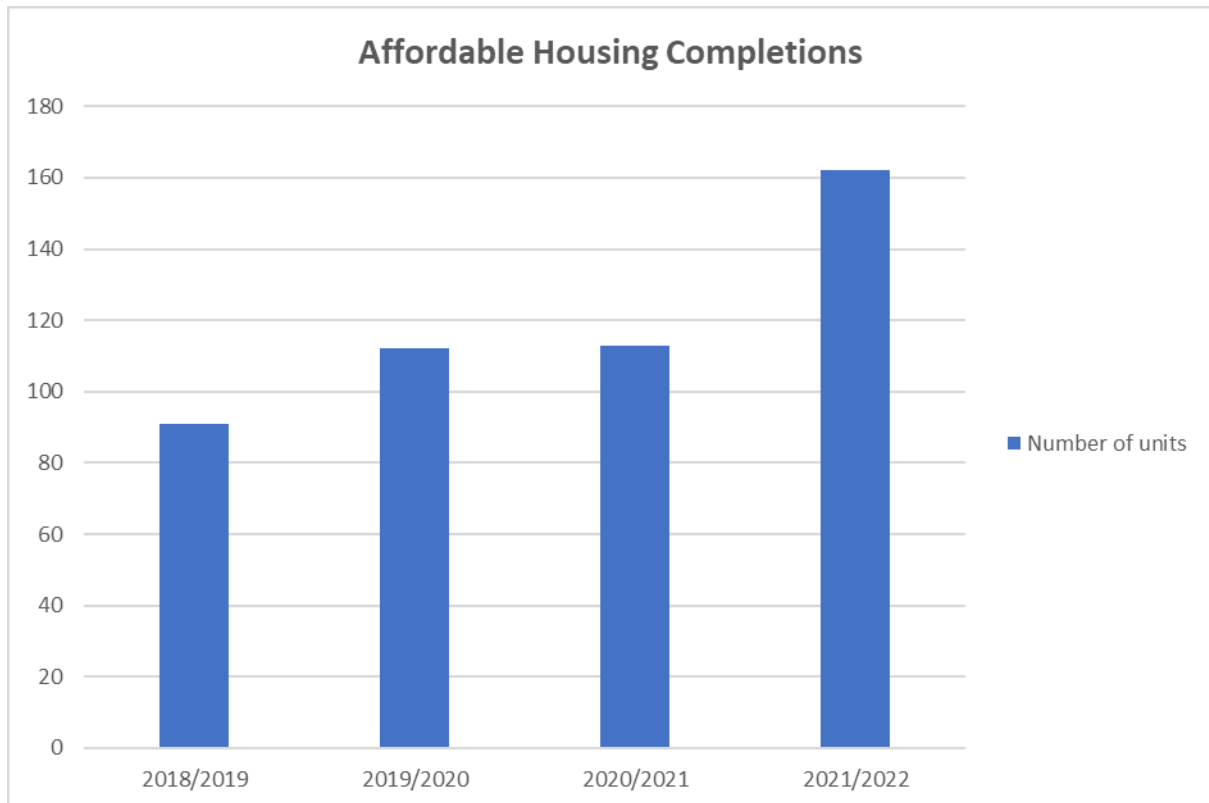
East Lancashire has a well-established sub regional working group to assist in the development of strategies and shared best practice. The lead offices and officers working groups continue to meet and provide valuable opportunity to work in partnership, co-ordinate shared procedures and to network. Following the pandemic and the effective 'everyone in', policies to keep this momentum going the Next Steps Accommodation Programme was released by government and a successful bid by East Lancs allowed for support staff for those non-priority individuals. Rough Sleepers Initiative grant award supports delivery of support staff for rough sleepers who can visit on the street.

The most recent successful joint bid is the Accommodation for Offenders Scheme which became operational September 2021.

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'.

The table below sets out the number of units developed over the past 4 years. This clearly demonstrates the high number delivered in 21/22



With an average house priced to an affordability ratio of 9 in 2020, addressing affordability is a key factor in providing the homelessness service. In Ribble Valley there is proportionately less stock in the lower Council Tax bands of A and B with 33% compared to Lancashire's 58% profile. The table on page 17 demonstrates the housing profile in the borough.

The tenure choice in the borough is limited; the borough has one of the lowest percentages of social housing stock in Lancashire. The situation was further exacerbated since 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 again reduced the LHA rates in the borough.

Policies introduced to address the situation include:

- addressing Housing Needs Policy 2012 required 30% of all new development sites to be affordable and 15% to be housing for older people;
- grant initiatives for development of private rented properties with affordable rent levels;
- regular contact with RP's to encourage development;

- a protocol to work closely with planning to advise developers and enable development at pre application stage.

Partnership Working with Onward Homes

In 2008 stock transfer took place, further change was formalised on 1 October 2017 when Ribble Valley Homes amalgamated with Liverpool Housing Trust, Hyndburn Homes and Peak Valley Housing Association to become Onward Homes Limited.

The housing needs service within the Council carry out the main 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.
- Manage and maintain the homeless temporary accommodation provision.

Onward deliver the following roles on behalf of the Council, these include:

- maintaining the housing register;
- securing permanent accommodation to discharge homelessness duty;
- allocating the Registered Provider stock as properties become available;
- nomination to Housing Associations as their stock becomes available.
- Allow the use of a unit of accommodation at Longridge for temporary accommodation.

The Council have maintained strong connections with Onward Homes and have established a monthly monitoring meeting to discuss nominations and procedures between the organisations.

Partnership Working with Neighbouring Authorities

Throughout the pandemic there was various new funding streams made available to support the new demands on the service. All grant opportunities supported joint bids and working on a sub-regional footprint. The following lists the current grant streams;

Rough Sleeping Initiative – This grant stream funds navigators to support rough sleepers in providing emergency accommodation and support those rough sleeping. The support staff are based in Blackburn but cover RV when needed. The additional funding also covers any additional costs for temporary B & B or hostel costs. Blackburn are the lead authority.

Accommodation for Offenders – This scheme was a joint bid across East Lancs to provide a support scheme for ex-offenders to assist individuals with rehousing on release from prison. There was also a grant award for individuals of £10,000 per authority. Pendle are the lead authority.

Homeless Prevention Winter Grant top up allocation – this award was allocated to each borough providing a grant with the intention of supporting private renters to prevent eviction a total of £14,200.

Protect & Vaccinate allocation – This additional award had the intention of ensuring all rough sleepers were in self contained accommodation and that they would be incentivised to take all 3 vaccines offered.

Partnership working with Health

Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings – a bi-weekly meeting to discuss all complex homeless cases and to address their holistic needs in partnership rather than trying to address their housing need in isolation. This has proved to be beneficial for all partners. The lead for the scheme is a nurse practitioner funded by Lancashire Care NHS.

Changing Futures – on a similar footprint the Changing Lives programmes aims to bring all practitioners together to support the individual suffering from being disadvantaged. Partners in health, mental health, addiction, social services, probation will be advice the lived experienced. This is being delivered on an East Lancs basis.

Partnership with Registered Providers

Our key registered provider partners in the delivery of new affordable housing and management of existing stock are:

Onward Homes
Jigsaw Homes
Great Places Housing Association
Mosscares St Vincents

We have worked closely with all of the above partners for many years and we are proud of the achievements we have delivered in partnership.

A bi-annual meeting of all registered providers ensures we keep all our partners involved and informed.

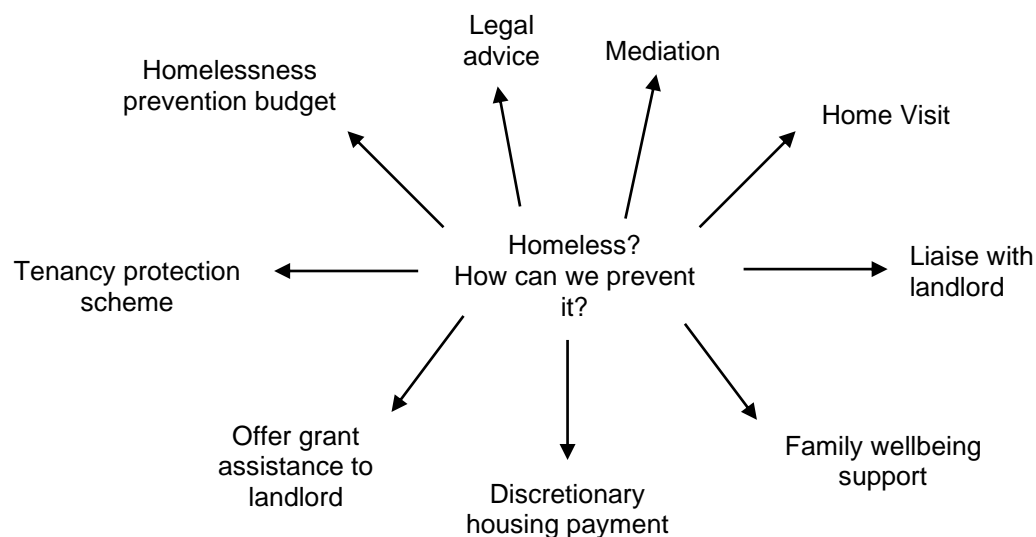
Achievements to Date

Since the Council's first homelessness strategy in 2003, there has been a strategic direction for the homeless prevention approach that has subsequently been adopted. In the past 5 years there have been many significant achievements in Ribble Valley's response to tackling homeless and the Council has:

- The service is focused to deliver a housing advice approach and focus on homelessness prevention.
- Delivered over 300 affordable new build properties across the borough including both affordable rent and shared ownership units.
- Reviewed the Allocations policy in light of the Localism Bill and then again in 2018.
- Developed a sanctuary scheme with HARV (Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Domestic Violence Organisation);



- Maintained a successful and well attended homeless forum;
- Maintained a low use of families being placed into bed and breakfast, under 2 families in any year.
- Carried out consultation events with homeless households;
- Worked with supporting people and Places for people to develop a support service that covered both the hostel and the sidings to share resources.
- Significantly improved temporary accommodation facilities at the hostel with renovation of communal space and improved fire and smoke detection throughout.
- Introduced a new homelessness database to more accurate record keeping Locata.
- Worked in partnership with the Ribble Valley foodbank to support households struggling to feed their family.
- Undertaken a review of all RP stock in the borough and produced an up to date leaflet listing all affordable properties.
- Reviewed the allocation policy, the points system and the housing waiting list in 2018.
- Secured an additional self-contained temporary accommodation unit in Clitheroe.
- In partnership with East Lancs authorities delivered various schemes , Accommodation for Offenders , Rough Sleeper support , and multi-disciplinary health teams.



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 2024, Ribble Valley Borough Council aims to:

- ensure all households in the borough are aware of the provision of the housing needs service;
- ensure all new housing schemes reflect the housing needs of the locality;
- ensure services are in place to prevent any rough sleeping in the borough;
- provide temporary accommodation that suitably meets the needs of households.
- 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 75 affordable homes per year and ensure they address the identified need of the borough.

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.

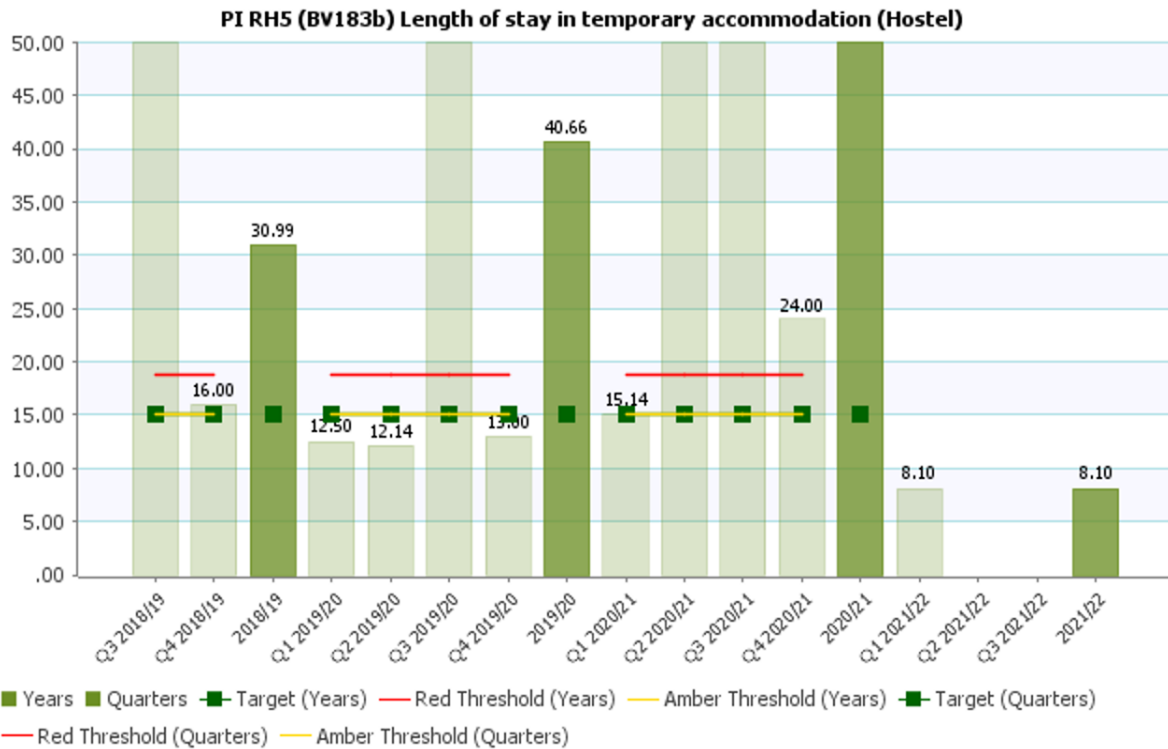
In order to make this Strategy a live document that actually delivers against its action plan, all actions are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound). The Action Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and provisions will be made to consider new priorities and targets.

The Homelessness 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.

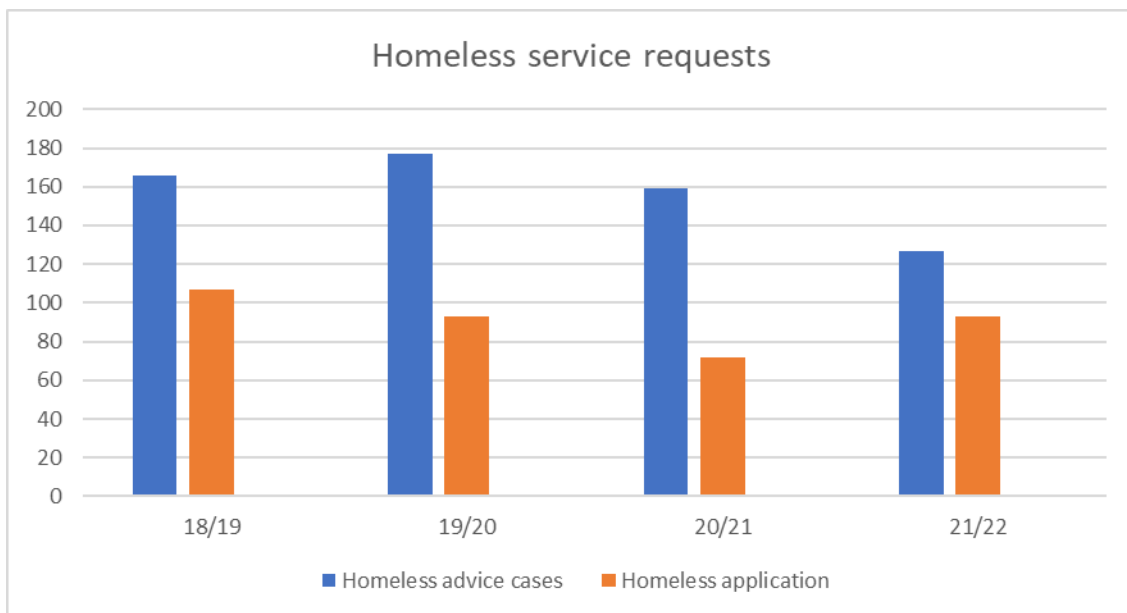
Review of Current Scale and Nature of Homelessness in Ribble Valley

The graph below allows us to identify where our prevention measures should be concentrated. The main reason households approach the council is seeking accommodation, affordable accommodation. In terms of reason for needing accommodation the main cause is parental eviction and relationship breakdown, which is difficult to prevent, but mediation is offered in these cases.

Loss of rented accommodation is the second main cause and raising awareness of early intervention there are initiatives introduced to prevent this, landlords' renovation grants and a floating support service. We will approach the landlord on the tenant's behalf to try to prevent the eviction and where possible resolve the issues. Relationship breakdown is the 3rd most common cause. Therefore, it is limited as to how much assistance can be offered other than advice as to the individual's rights.



The graph below shows the number of households accepted as homeless where the Council has a full statutory duty to rehouse. The numbers have remained low over the years and only in the last year gone over the 10 households. This is only a small part of the picture as the main aim of the service is to prevent households reaching this point.

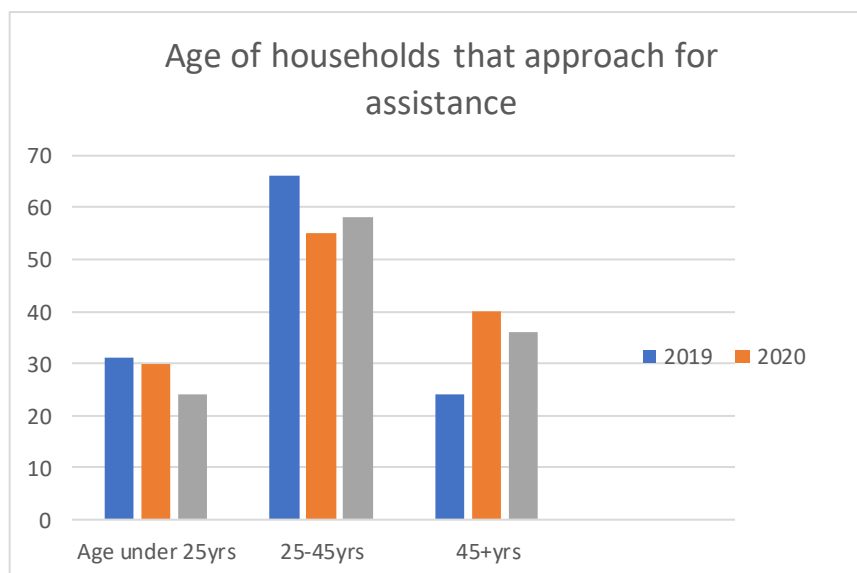


Once we have provided households with temporary accommodation the next challenge is finding those households secure suitable accommodation. This can often take many weeks, and this is an agreed priority for the Council to reduce this time period.

The supply of new affordable housing stock, through securing affordable rental units on sites and also ensuring that we have a nomination agreement and an allocation policy that reflects this need is essential.

The nomination agreement and allocation policy have been reviewed in 2018, this was undertaken in partnership with Onward and all RP's in the borough were consulted. These policies are essential to ensure that housing is allocated to the most in need in a fair and transparent way.

Advice Outcomes Analysed by Age Group 2019-2022



The table above showing the average range of households that seek advice, the highest group is the 25-45 year olds, therefore working age group who are most likely to have dependants. This is followed by 16-25 year olds; very few older persons seek advice for housing.

Homeless Applications Received Over the Past 5 Years and the Decision Made

Of the applications taken over the past 5 years the number where a full duty has been accepted, correlate to the number of applications. There are no significant changes in the numbers of households seeking housing advice.

The data above demonstrates the number of households that are assisted by the housing needs service each year and reflects the amount prevention work undertaken in order to reduce the households that are placed in temporary accommodation.

This is a difficult challenge as the housing options for households are limited. The private rented sector provides very little for the households seeking assistance. The private sector market in Ribble Valley is high demand so landlords can demand high rents, high deposits and are very selective. Changes in the tax rules has meant alot of landlords are looking to sell property and are not willing to take any risks with tenants. This means landlords are unlikely to offer a tenancy to households that present as homeless.

Domestic Abuse in Ribble Valley

The Domestic Abuse Act 2020 places a duty on LCC to appoint a multi-agency DA Local Partnership Board, assess the need for accommodation-based support and to develop and publish a Strategy .For RVBC the duty is to co-operate with the lead authority.

The Domestic Abuse services is delivered and monitored across Hyndburn and Ribble Valley neighboring authorities and commissioned by LCC. The service commissioned to deliver the housing related support service is HARV Hyndburn and Ribble Valley domestic abuse service and this is a long-established partner in the borough. The service has been operating for over 10 years and different grant awards over the years have allowed different additional support hours;

Between January and December 2021, domestic abuse offences in the Ribble Valley increased by 4.2% (13) compared with January to December 2020.

- There were a total of 324 domestic abuse crimes recorded during the period. Of these 156 were domestic assaults. There were 57 assaults less serious injury, 96 offences of no injury domestic assault and 3 serious domestic assaults.
- There were 54 offences of domestic related harassment and stalking
- There were 49 offences of domestic related malicious communication.
- Alcohol was a factor in at least 20% (65) of all domestic abuse offences.
- At least 33.9% of domestic assaults were alcohol related (53).
- Females accounted for at least 68.2% (221) of victims.
- Males accounted for at least 26.9% (87) of victims.
- 4.9% of gender fields were blank (16).
- The victims were aged between 15 and 90 years old.
- 15.4% (50) of all domestic abuse cases were aged 35-39.
- 25 to 29 years was the peak age group for female victims of domestic abuse (38).
- 35 to 39 years was the peak age group for male victims of domestic abuse (17).
- Littlemoor ward had the highest percentage of domestic abuse offences in 2021 with 10.8% (35), followed by Derby and Thornley ward 8.6% (28) and Salthill 8.0% (26)

The DA Act does not accept the use of accommodation with shared facilities. This has introduced a new issue which needs addressing .Domestic abuse remains one of the main reasons for homelessness.

Gender/Age group	0-4	05-09	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	Over 70	U/K	Total
Female	0	0	0	19	28	38	25	33	19	13	17	10	6	7	6	0	221
Male	0	0	0	6	13	6	5	17	4	12	8	4	2	3	6	1	87
Unknown	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	10	16
Total	0	0	0	26	42	45	31	50	24	26	25	14	8	10	12	11	324

Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation

The average length of stay has increased in the 2 past years 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 discharge duty.

Temporary Accommodation – The Current Situation in Ribble Valley



At the Joiners Arms 90 Whalley Rd Clitheroe, the temporary accommodation in Clitheroe, there is 7 units of accommodation, four are fully self-contained units, three units have toilet and wash hand basins, and share bathroom facilities.

There is one additional self-contained flat in Clitheroe and in Longridge, therefore proving 9 temporary units in total for families and single households.

The facilities have been continually improved and since taking back the management there has been an intensive programme to improve the fire protection and communal area. The accommodation now has on-site laundry facilities, a communal meeting room, access to IT facilities and a garden and play area. The aim is to continue to improve the accommodation through the annual works programme.

There is an on-site warden service every weekday.

Support is provided by Places for People and they support clients in the hostel on a daily basis. This is provided through a contract awarded by LCC.

Young persons accommodation The Sidings also provides 7 self contained flats for 16-19 yrs olds. The scheme gives priority to referrals from Children's Social Care and for those referrals that have no priority then they are given a 56 day licence. This is to ensure 16/17 year olds are placed in the supported accommodation and given priority.



Appendix 1 lists the main areas of improvement service users have identified.

Prevention of Homelessness against the Main Causes

Current Situation in Ribble Valley

The housing need service is completely focused on prevention. This is reflected in the steady reduction in the number of decisions made. For each cause of homelessness there is a preventative tool available. For the two main causes in the borough relationship breakdown and parental / family eviction there is a limited amount of intervention, however early advice is always helpful.



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 is 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 over 350 households into private rented accommodation since being established. However, landlords are becoming more reluctant to accept the bond as there is always high demand for property without taking a higher risk tenant. 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 shorthold tenancy or due to arrears.

The Floating Support Service provided a crucial service for 6 years in ensuring that households at risk of losing their property within the private rented sector. Unfortunately, now there is no support available for households in this position. The lack of this provision was identified as a key area that needed addressing at the homeless forum, particularly in light of the fact that the homelessness review identified that the main causes of

homelessness in Ribble Valley is family and friends evicting.

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 available to establish the real reason and mediation is always offered, we identified a need to develop a prevention package in partnership with a range of services specifically targeted at young people this is delivered by YNOT. The package includes early intervention signposting and referrals to floating support, mediation, supported accommodation and identified planned moves from the family home. This early intervention 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. Loss of assured shorthold tenancy is the third highest cause of homelessness. This cause again has seen a significant reduction. The repossession prevention scheme offers financial assistance for households facing repossession where there are dependants, and the reason is ill health or loss of income. There have been considerable resources introduced to initiate this reduction. 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.

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. The 3 house share properties made available through partnership with Castlegate, YMCA and RVH Home visits are another valuable preventative measure particularly in family relationship breakdowns again reducing the use of temporary accommodation.

PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATION

Key affordability facts can be found in the table below.

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 had improved over the past four years with the ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings to being 9.8 in 2010 and 7.8 in 2012; and 8.1 in 2017 however then 2020 ratio is back to 9.
- Ribble Valley has the lowest proportion of social dwellings in the northwest with 2420. The area is projected to experience the largest increase in population in the northwest. The average house price for the whole district in 2020 was £263,000.
- 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 the ratio is 9.

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.

North West	Average (mean) house prices in 2019/20 ¹	Mean annual earnings in 2019/20 ²	Ratio of house prices to incomes in 2019/20 ³	Income required for 80% mortgage in 2019/20 ⁴	Mean monthly private sector rents in 2019/20 ⁵	Unemployment rate in 2019/20 ⁶	Housing Benefit claimants - total in employment (and not Passported) % ⁷	Long-term empty homes in 2020 ⁸	Second homes in 2020 ⁹	Total housing association affordable homes in 2018/19 ¹⁰
England	£309,678	£30,248	10	£70,784	£843	3.9%	17.3%	268,385	262,953	2,753,583
North West	£200,179	£27,607	7	£45,755	£629	4%	10.5%	44,560	29,177	518,363
Blackburn with Darwen UA	£143,884	£23,046	6	£32,888	£503	4.9%	6.8%	1,155	224	11,821
Eden	£232,941	£24,216	10	£53,244	£571	1.7%	10%	559	1,306	2,743
Lancashire	£181,522	£26,406	7	£41,491	£570	2.6%	9.7%	7,794	3,282	59,396
Burnley	£113,616	£25,912	4	£25,969	£469	5.3%	9.1%	780	166	6,152
Hyndburn	£121,082	£23,587	5	£27,676	£482	4.3%	7.6%	656	67	4,992
Lancaster	£184,797	£25,771	7	£42,239	£574	4.5%	8.8%	932	712	3,100
Pendle	£134,038	£22,568	6	£30,637	£498	4.5%	10.6%	765	192	4,668
Preston	£171,515	£25,272	7	£39,203	£559	3.4%	12.2%	1,304	715	11,999
Ribble Valley	£263,303	£30,108	9	£60,184	£689	2.1%	10.6%	191	219	2,420
Rossendale	£160,374	£25,428	6	£36,657	£553	3.3%	5.4%	536	123	4,718

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 and addressing the identified needs.
- The Council set a target of delivering 75 affordable homes per year and this has been achieved annually. In 2021/22 a record number of affordable units were developed 162 in total.
- The Council approved a Addressing Housing Needs Policy to secure 30% affordable housing on all developments and 15% to be for older people.
- There is a Ribble Valley affordable housing development protocol, which assists developers at every stage in the process to encourage applications.
- The Council invests over £100,000 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;
- The Tenancy Protection Scheme was established with a paper bond covering up to £800. This has been largely replaced with a loan offer as very few landlords were accepting the paper bond.

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.

In 2022 a new grant initiative was launched to assist first time buyers with the cost of renovating a property. This was to give an affordable option that allows people to access home ownership.

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 counterbalance 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.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2013

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment carried out in 2013 established that there is a need for 404 affordable dwellings per year in Ribble Valley; however this figure does not equal the number of new affordable units to be built. The need will be met through a wide range of sources – but particularly by making better use of vacant stock, by making better use of the existing stock and through the private rented sector.

- i) One bedroom and four-bedroom affordable homes are particularly required.
- ii) Relatively few households in housing need could afford Affordable Rent at 80% of the median market rent. The most practical level to set Affordable Rent to meet substantial need is at 70%.
- iii) Factoring higher affordability thresholds households in the private rented sector pay in current market conditions and the supply of private rented accommodation (via LHA) to house those requiring affordable housing, the need for new affordable units reduces notably – however changes to the administration of LHA mean that it is unlikely to continue.

Cost and Affordability of Housing

According to data from the Land Registry, the mean house price in Ribble Valley is £263,303, higher than the average for the North West region and England as a whole. Data shows that whilst prices have remained largely static since the economic downturn, the number of property sales has fallen dramatically. An income of £60,184 is required to purchase a property. The average rent is £689.



- i) The cost of housing by size was assessed for all tenures across the Borough. Entry-level prices in Ribble Valley range from £90,300 for a one-bedroom home in the Clitheroe price market up to £304,000 for a four-bedroom property in the Rural price market. Entry-level rents in Ribble Valley range from £400 per month for a one bedroom home up to £1,000 per month for a four-bedroom property.
- ii) Housing market gaps analysis shows the nature of the housing ladder in a particular locality. An analysis of the gaps between each tenure shows that there is a large income gap between the social rented sector and market entry. This indicates that intermediate housing priced within this gap could potentially be useful for a number of households in Ribble Valley.
- iii) Flexible Tenancies are being introduced as a new tenure. They will allow Affordable Rent to be charged. Affordable Rent will be based on the open market value of each property. Within Ribble Valley, as bedroom size increases the range of Affordable Rents possible increases.

iv) Although affordability has theoretically improved since the start of the economic downturn, there remains a large proportion of households in Ribble Valley that are unable to afford to buy.

Affordable Housing Delivery in the borough

Year	Open Market	Affordable	Total	Affordable as % of all dwellings
2016/17	290	100	390	25.6
2017/18	330	70	400	17.5
2018/19	301	111	412	26.9
2019/20	465	94	559	16.8
2020/21	332	121	453	26.7

Comparison on delivery rates to neighbouring boroughs

Year	Affordable Dwellings Completed 2020/21	Affordable Completions as a percentage of all dwellings 2020/21
Wyre	151	25%
Blackburn	141	34%
Ribble Valley	121	27%
Burnley	70	18%
Lancaster	41	14%
South Ribble	37	9%
Pendle	21	6%

Future Timetable for Homelessness Strategy

The strategy has been approved by Health & Housing Committee. The achievements to deliver the action plan set out in the document will be reported bi-annually to the homeless forum and annually to Health and Housing Committee. Should there be any requirement to amend the document in the 5 year period then this will be reported to Health and Housing Committee.

Strategic Aim – IMPROVE THE HOUSING ADVICE, INFORMATION AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE

<u>INITIATIVE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED</u>	<u>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</u>	<u>PARTNERS</u>
Ensure service is accessible as possible via IT, telephone or face to face	All households can access advice Ensure RVBC website is updated	Ongoing	Within existing resources	HLN Steering Group Housing Needs Officer
Develop good communication with all relevant organisations	Review HLN forum attendees, ensure all agencies are represented	Review annually at each Homeless Forum	Within existing resources	HLN Steering Group Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership
Introduce new database to capture all the required information for HCLiC. Ensure best use of the Locata database	Utilise Locata and accessing reports. Improve reporting data	Achieved Attend training Improve reporting skills Sept 22	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer IT Section Housing Needs Officer Locata support
Collate information on all relevant HLN services in Ribble Valley and neighbouring authorities	Ensure all the information is on the Council's website	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Housing Needs Officer Housing Strategy Officers
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
Utilise support services wherever possible NSAP, RSI and Changing Futures Programmes	Refer all potential homelessness households to the most appropriate support provider	Monitored quarterly	Within existing resources Report the need for additional	Lancashire Wellbeing Service Children and Family Wellbeing Service Transforming Lives
Improve communication with clients	Use text messages/email where client prefers	Achieved	Within existing resources	Housing Needs Officer Housing Admin Officer

<u>INITIATIVE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED</u>	<u>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</u>	<u>PARTNERS</u>
Improve advice available online	Ensure upto date advice online and support services	Ongoing	Training costs for staff	Housing Needs Officer Housing Officer Housing Admin Officer
Ensure staff are kept up to date with homelessness case law.	Provide regular access to training options for housing needs staff. As new guidance is produced for non-British citizens.	To organise Jan 23	Training costs for staff.	Housing Strategy Officer NHAS Shelter
Raise awareness of all housing services across the borough	Use Council newspaper, website, twitter, Parish Council meeting and village notice boards to promote the service.	On going	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer Parish Council Liaison Communications officer
Establish a baseline of satisfaction and identify where improvements can be developed	Undertake customer satisfaction research	annually	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer Places for People
Improve housing and support information on the website	Regular updates of the website to be done as routine	April 2023	Within existing resources	IT Service Housing Officer
Improve accessibility of service outside of Clitheroe with a focus on Longridge	Demonstrate use of service from households outside of Clitheroe.	Jan 2023	Within existing resources	Housing Needs Officer
Respond to any 'duty to refer' requests	Review if the route of receiving DtR and if they can be improved	Jan 2022	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer IT service.
Support the rough sleeper initiative across East Lancashire	Support the bid to provide support/prevent rough sleepers across East Lancashire	Ongoing	Bid to be submitted to MHCLG and Blackburn to manage the scheme.	All East Lancs Authorities.
Access NHAS training for staff	Enable staff to access upto date training courses	available	Within existing resources	Shelter
Maintain the Homewise offer to provide assistance to older/vulnerable households	Ensure continuation of Homewise funding	Reviewed annually	Requires committee approval	Homewise

Strategic Aim – PREVENT HOMELESSNESS IN THE BOROUGH

<u>INITIATIVE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED</u>	<u>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</u>	<u>PARTNERS</u>
Utilise discretionary housing (DHP) payments to prevent homelessness.	Advise and support households to make discretionary housing payment claims Regular contact with HB staff	Monitored annually	Utilise DHP monies annually	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 job centre staff 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	Utilise all available support services and the requirements of the new act.	On going	Within existing resources	Landlords Forum Group Housing Needs Officer Communication Officer
Prevent homelessness through loss of RSL tenancy	Ensure early warning system in place with each RP's in the borough	Jan 2022	Within existing resources	All RP's Housing Strategy Officer
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	ongoing	Within existing resources	Places for People Housing Strategy Officer Scheme Warden
Update list of all temporary and permanent housing providers in the borough	Update the leaflet and distribute to all service providers	May 2022	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	June 24	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer HLN Steering Group

<u>INITIATIVE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED</u>	<u>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</u>	<u>PARTNERS</u>
Maintain homeless forum group to regularly monitor performance of initiatives	Meet twice a year to review progress and update the action plan	Ongoing Forum was not held for 2 years due to covid	Within existing resources	Homeless Forum
Prevent homelessness precipitated by health issues support the MDT meetings	Develop joint working protocols for hospital discharge.	June 2022	Better care fund	Health & Wellbeing Group Health & Housing Committee
	Improve referral pathways between agencies to enable access to supported accommodation	On going		
Engage with the Changing Futures Programme	Ensure the service is promoted and utilised in the borough and all partners are fully aware of the ability to access.	Delivery due to start Jan 22	Raise awareness with partners	Support service CFWS CAB
Ensure all households sponsored through the Homes for Ukraine scheme are aware of the housing service.	Work with LCC and the CUSP to ensure all households are supported. Employ a dedicated member of staff to provide the support.	From 2022 onwards	RVBC to receive grant award to fund post.	LCC CUSP
Undertake a full review of the temp accommodation provisions in the borough	Full review of the suitability, standard and current offer of temporary accommodation in the borough	July 2023	Full review of accommodation and suitability. Finding to be reported to H & H Committee.	H & H Committee Homeless Forum
Improve the standards at the accommodation	Review the furniture decorations and fittings.	August 22	To request additional funding from policy and finance.	

Strategic Aim – IMPROVE PROVISION AND SUITABILITY OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION AND REDUCE THE LENGTH OF TIME SPENT IN TEMPORARY

<u>INITIATIVE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED</u>	<u>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</u>	<u>PARTNERS</u>
Utilise specialist housing schemes outside borough	Improve communications with out of borough schemes	Sept 2023	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer Housing Needs Officer
Maintain close working relationship with Onward	Organise bi-weekly meeting with a standard agenda item of temporary accommodation	On going	Within existing resources	Onward Housing Needs Officer Strategic Housing Officer
Improve options to work for households in temporary accommodation	Ensure IT access at the hostel in Clitheroe and support presence	Jan 2022	Using ODPM monies	IT Section Housing Strategy Officer
	Work with Job Centre and Connexions to provide IT support for completion of job applications online	Sept 2022	Within existing resources	Job Centre Connexions Housing Strategy Officer
Reduce length of time spent in temporary accommodation	Move on housing plan to be part of support plan	March 2023	Utilising ODPM funding	Onward Housing Strategy Officer Places for People
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.	Jan 2023	Within existing resources	Onward Housing Officer Places for People
Ensure that all families from homeless households receive necessary health check	Refer all households to MDT meetings	Jan 2022	East Lancs Health Authority	Housing Strategy Officer Health Centre Places for People
Improve and utilise garden room at hostel	Ensure room is kept clean and there is access for all Improve the furniture	Jan 2022	Within existing resources	Homestart LCC Adult Education Housing Officer Inward House
Improve services for households with mental health needs	Ensure engaging in support is part of housing plan	June 2023	NHS funding	Mental Team Manager Housing Strategy Officer

<u>INITIATIVE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED</u>	<u>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</u>	<u>PARTNERS</u>
Consult service users of their experience in temporary accommodation	Carry out an exit questionnaire with each user. Present the feedback to the homelessness forum.	Twice each year	Dependant on homeless budget and grant availability.	Homeless forum Places for people
Increase supply of affordable housing and maximise use of existing	Work with partner RP's to deliver maximum number of rented units on Sect 106 sites and grant aided sites.	On going	Homes England Funding Sect 106 contributions	Developers RP's Homes England
Respond to the new duties under the DA Act	Work in partnership with LCC to meet the requirement of the act along with all other Lancs districts	Dec 2022	Funding awarded via DHLUC	LCC HARV
Assess the need for safe house accommodation in the borough	Investigate the option of safe house accommodation provision in the borough.	April 2023	Cost of a house purchase in the borough and the management of the property	LCC HARV

(this was raised at the Forum and requested it should be an action within the strategy)

Strategic Aim –INCREASE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR HOUSEHOLDS AND TYPES OF AFFORDABLE SECURE HOUSING OPTIONS.

<u>INITIATIVE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED</u>	<u>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</u>	<u>PARTNERS</u>
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	Engage with private landlords and agents to encourage them to accept households on benefit and the TPS	On going	Landlord/tenant grant funded	Local estate agents Housing Needs Officers
Set affordable secure rent levels and nomination rights	Promote grant available to encourage landlords to invest in private rented sector	January 2022	Private sector grant budget	Housing Strategy Officer Health & Housing Committee
Maintain Tenancy Protection Scheme	Annually top up the scheme and ensure maximum number of households benefit and can access the private rented sector	June 2022	Consider bidding for additional funding	Housing Strategy Officer
Increase the number of affordable private rented properties available for homeless households.	Maintain the funding available for landlord tenant grants in 2013-2018		Annual budget of 100k transferred into landlord tenant budget	Housing Strategy Officer Health & Housing Committee
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	On going	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Officer Onward

<u>INITIATIVE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>DATE TO BE IMPLEMENTED</u>	<u>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</u>	<u>PARTNERS</u>
Ensure all partners aware of level of need in borough and kept fully informed of demand	Arrange regular RSL forums and Housing Forums	Agreed with RP's to meet twice a year	Within existing resources	Chair of Health & Housing Housing Strategy Officer RP's
Improve single low income earners access to affordable housing	Work with developers to secure young person's accommodation	September 2023		Developers Development Control RP's
Agree one bed accommodation is developed as a priority.	Encourage private landlords to consider one bed accommodation.	April 2022	Utilise social rent grant	Housing Strategy Officer Housing Officer
Accommodation for Offenders Programme	Refer whenever relevant and make best use of service	Oct 2021	Use £1k per offender for rehousing	Gateway East Lancs Authorities Probation