

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2019-2024



Introduction and background

Aim

To ensure anyone facing homelessness in the borough is offered the right support. Intervening early to prevent where possible and supporting throughout to secure sustainable accommodation. Working towards a vision of communities that have resilience to the underlying causes of homelessness.

About

This strategy sets out both short-term actions to overcome challenges identified in the homelessness review but also longer-term actions to develop community resilience to the underlying causes of homelessness. It integrates these actions with the existing priorities of the Housing Strategy, benefiting from the synergy of aligned objectives.

Since the Homelessness Act 2002 Local Authorities have had a statutory duty to publish a homelessness strategy based on the findings of their homelessness reviews. The act mandates that the strategy includes actions around three objectives:

- Preventing homelessness
- Securing sufficient accommodation
- Ensuring satisfactory support is available

The action plan includes which of these objectives are met by each corresponding action point to aid in the integration of the strategies.

Key priorities

- Securing quality across all housing tenures
- Supporting people to remain independent in their own homes
- Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
- Supporting a balanced housing market

Linked strategies

The council takes a wraparound approach towards preventing and supporting homelessness bringing various services together to provide seamless support throughout. As such this strategy is interlinked with those of other services both internal and external. Some key links include:

- Chorley Council Housing Strategy
- Chorley Council Community Resilience Framework
- Integrated community wellbeing service for Chorley – Outline business case
- Central Lancashire Local Plan (in development)
- Lancashire Joint Protocol

Timescales

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy covers the period from 2019-2024. Key actions will be completed over this timeframe and yearly updates on its objectives will be made as per new legislation.

Priority: Securing quality across all housing tenures

Context

Having a secure and sustainable home is a foundation to wellbeing, allowing people to focus on overcoming other issues they may face. Lack of secure housing leads to a range of inequalities from health to education and employment. The homelessness review identified that presentations from the private rented sector are over four times greater than the social rented sector and that strengthening tenants' rights is currently on the national policy agenda with several legislative changes proposed. There is also a need to ensure that tenants know existing rights and understand both their responsibilities and that support pathways are available to all tenants regardless of tenure type. This priority aims to ensure fair and consistent treatment regardless of tenure by ensuring support is in place for all those who rent.

Principles

- Everyone should expect consistency and fair treatment regardless of tenure
- Effective tenant and landlord support pathways should be available and visible to all those who rent regardless of tenure
- Tenants should not feel deterred from reporting issues by the prospect of detriment such as revenge eviction or rent rises

What we already do

The council takes a partnership approach holding regular meetings via the Select Move partnership with registered providers allowing for positive communication channels between social housing providers and housing officers. This leads to forewarning when issues are starting to build-up and allows early intervention to often correct problems in their early stages before formal thresholds such as being threatened by homelessness occur. The council also hosts the Private Landlord Forum arranging guest speakers on various best practices and legislative changes attempting to establish similar communication with local private landlords. This offers an opportunity for landlords to engage with housing officers who attend, fostering positive communication pathways. However, given the dispersed nature of the private rental sector the impact is limited to proactive landlords who engage.

Key Actions

- Establish a community led approach to developing awareness of tenant rights and responsibilities
- Review the Private Landlord Forum for ways to raise engagement and awareness
- Capture data on no-fault evictions following repairs requests and complaints
- Develop a voluntary standard including referral practices and pathways to promote communication and early intervention across all rented tenures

Priority: Supporting people to remain independent in their existing homes

Context

The council has a long-term vision of developing resilient communities that more easily support themselves and have less dependence on public services. Independent living is a key aspect of this vision and the homelessness review highlights that such independence relies on skills such as managing a budget and fulfilling tenancy requirements. The review identified that in the wake of Universal Credit's shift away from housing allowance being paid directly to landlords, budgeting skills have become more important with significant increases in financial issues leading to homelessness. Debt can also worsen other homelessness risk factors such as mental health and substance misuse meaning increased early support can boost resilience across multiple factors. This priority aims to address this skills gap by setting out a plan for community driven support around these issues.

Principles

- Practical skills such as managing a budget are fundamental to independence and we will ensure there are adequate opportunities to develop these skills
- Support is best delivered at the community level, prior to issues like debt mounting up, community resilience will be built by helping people to help themselves

What we already do

Our home improvement agency delivers property adaptations supporting residents to overcome physical barriers to independent living, this helps reduce homelessness due to unsuitable property. The council's Housing Solutions team also have measures in place to help those who are threatened by homelessness due to budgeting issues to develop budgeting skills often helping prevent homelessness occurring. Repeat homelessness data suggests this support is highly successful with Universal Credit issues dropping from 29% of first presentations to 1% of repeat homelessness cases and arrears caused by budgeting dropping from 24% to 10%. However, this support is currently only delivered reactively once the threshold of threatened with homelessness has been met, therefore debt has been accrued and a longer and more difficult recovery path can be expected.

Key Actions

- Deliver budgeting workshops in targeted communities linking to other initiatives as an important aspect of community resilience
- Develop a train the trainer approach that enables community champions to identify financial issues early and offer basic budgeting support and pathways for referral into existing support

Priority: Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping

Context

Having a high caseload of preventions alongside low levels of relief duty Chorley is ahead of the national shift towards targeting homelessness prior to crisis point. Yet 20% of local cases reoccur and with significantly more mental health (51% rising to 69%) and substance misuse issues (12% to 66%). Rough sleeping levels are also four times higher among these repeat cases. Such increases indicate a need for effective support pathways and links with other services to ensure that underlying issues are addressed alongside immediate housing needs. Without intervention underlying issues can fester and resurface later either as a repeat housing need or as other service needs which are often more extensive and difficult to overcome. This priority aims to improve pathways into other services for support provision while continuing the success of current processes in solving the immediate housing issue.

Principles

- Everyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness will be able to access advice and support in creating a housing plan
- Effective support pathways for underlying issues will be offered alongside efforts to resolve the immediate housing need
- We will work to strengthen partnership working to provide support for dealing with underlying issues such as poor mental health and substance misuse

What we already do

The council is already extremely active in preventing homelessness. The council owns and manages Cotswold Supported Housing, providing safe and supportive accommodation to those in need. In addition, we work closely with large social sector landlords and the VCSE sector to prevent and support tenants at risk of eviction. We also provide support with personal budgeting and referral pathways for debt advice. In addition to Select Move, we also provide an accommodation funding service to increase options for housing in the private rented sector. These resources have helped avoid regional and national trends of rising homelessness and rough sleeping.

Key Actions

- Maintain successful prevention activities which support immediate housing need
- Develop clear pathways for service users with underlying mental health and/or substance misuse issues, ensure these run alongside existing housing support
- Review the Chorley Council large commissioning grant process for opportunities around mental health and substance misuse support

Priority: Supporting a balanced housing market

Context

The population of and households in Chorley are growing at the fastest rate in Lancashire. Simultaneously the population is aging with the over 75 demographic set to grow from 13% to 24% by 2041. As the population changes so will the demands on housing type. The review also identified that social housing has less provision for larger families, with 3-bedroom housing wait times being more than double that of 1- and 2-bedroom properties, and 4-bedroom stock being scarcely available via Select Move. These findings suggest a need to support a balanced future housing market.

Principles

- There should be adequate and suitable housing stock to allow people to remain living independently or at the lowest levels of care intensity
- The council will take an active role in providing a balanced housing market with suitable accommodation for residents

What we already do

In recent years, the council has attempted to take a proactive role in ensuring that the housing market is balanced. This has included working with the Select Move partnership to entice those in adapted homes with no existing need and those under occupying to move to more suitable accommodation with priority bandings and managed moves. The council has also opened Primrose Gardens which has received great demand and now looks to further expand options for those with additional care needs. The in-house Home Improvements Agency also enables residents to remain living independently for longer by providing adaptations to existing properties making them more suitable to residents needs.

Key Actions

- Refresh the central Lancashire local plan
- Further expand our housing offer for people with additional care needs after the success of Primrose Gardens

Priority	Action	Why	Homelessness Strategy Objective(s)
Securing quality across all housing tenures	Establish a community led approach to developing awareness of tenant rights and responsibilities	Strengthening tenant rights is on the national agenda with many legislative changes being made and planned however tenant and landlord awareness of such rights and responsibilities is essential in order for it to be effective. Community led awareness approaches can deliver the message early before issues arise and also can reach those who don't typically engage with services such as those in the private rented sector.	Preventing Homelessness Securing Sufficient Accommodation Securing Satisfactory Support
	Review the Private Landlord Forum for ways to raise engagement and awareness	The Private Landlords Forum offers an opportunity for landlords to engage with housing officers, fostering positive communication pathways. However, given the dispersed nature of the private rental sector the impact is currently limited to proactive landlords who engage. Reviewing the scope of the offer and ways to entice landlords to engage should allow for a bigger forum to share best practices and improve the quality across all tenures.	Preventing Homelessness Securing Sufficient Accommodation Securing Satisfactory Support
	Capture data on no-fault evictions following repairs requests and complaints	There is recent legislation around revenge evictions however due to limits in where this applies challenges are rarely made on these grounds. Capturing data on how regularly no-fault evictions follow complaints and repairs requests will be a first step towards a rental market where tenants are comfortable demanding higher quality across all tenures.	Preventing Homelessness Securing Sufficient Accommodation Securing Satisfactory Support
	Develop a voluntary standard including referral practices and pathways to promote communication and early intervention across all rented tenures	A voluntary standard for rental housing will allow for local residents to choose from landlords and letting agents who maintain set quality standards and ethical practices including referral practices to promote communication and early intervention.	Preventing Homelessness Securing Sufficient Accommodation Securing Satisfactory Support
Supporting people to remain independent in their existing homes	Deliver budgeting workshops in targeted communities linking to other initiatives as an important aspect of community resilience	Changes introduced by Universal Credit have increased the need for budgeting skills reflected by rising budgeting related homelessness presentations. Current support is effective with budgeting issues dropping significantly between first time presentations and repeat presentations. However, this support is currently implemented at crisis point when arrears have already built up, so its effectiveness has the potential to improve greatly with earlier intervention and preventative measures delivered at the community level.	Preventing Homelessness Securing Sufficient Accommodation Securing Satisfactory Support
	Develop a train the trainer approach that enables community champions to identify financial issues early and offer basic budgeting support and pathways for referral into existing support		
Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping	Maintain successful prevention activities which support immediate housing need	Chorley has a number of successful processes already in place preventing homelessness and rough sleeping, as the review has noted; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chorley has withstood the rising trends seen elsewhere in rough sleeping Chorley is ahead of the national onus of shifting focus toward prevention having a very healthy ratio of prevention to crisis-point casework 	Preventing Homelessness Securing Sufficient Accommodation Securing Satisfactory Support
	Develop clear pathways for service users with underlying mental health and/or substance misuse issues, ensure these run alongside existing housing support	These issues provide a leverage point where focused efforts can improve the experience of over half of service customers as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 51% of presentations have Mental Health issues rising to 69% in repeat presentations Substance Misuse is the biggest predictor of repeat homelessness going from 12% to 66% for recurring homelessness Both increase in repeat homelessness indicating room for improvement in solving underlying issues Complex cases often have dual diagnosis, support offerings for both are limited. Wraparound approaches offer a potential solution	Preventing Homelessness Securing Sufficient Accommodation Securing Satisfactory Support
	Review the Chorley Council large commissioning grant process for opportunities around mental health and substance misuse support	The existing large commissioning process offers an opportunity to re-align existing grants to meet current objectives	Preventing Homelessness Securing Sufficient Accommodation Securing Satisfactory Support
Supporting a balanced housing market	Refresh the Central Lancashire local plan	Ensure that the Central Lancashire local plan meets the changing needs identified in the borough.	Preventing Homelessness Securing Sufficient Accommodation Securing Satisfactory Support
	Further expand our housing offer for people with additional care needs after the success of Primrose Gardens	Primrose Gardens has received a high level of interest, the council will continue to further expand options for those with additional care needs to help in meeting current and expected future levels of demand.	Preventing Homelessness Securing Sufficient Accommodation Securing Satisfactory Support

