

**APPENDIX 1 - BURNLEY
HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH
SLEEPING STRATEGY
2021 - 2026**

Introduction

Burnley's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2020-2025 has been developed during a period of unprecedented change and uncertainty. Whilst the housing and homelessness challenges will shape the detail of this strategy, the overarching context is the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, which is having, and will continue to have, an impact in communities in our local area, as well as in the UK and globally.

Burnley Council and our partners will continue to respond to housing need and homelessness, and therefore the development of this strategy is important, but the medium and longer term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on housing and homelessness are not yet clear. We know that, more than ever before, we need to ensure the Action Plan which accompanies this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is continually reviewed and when needed, can be updated or changed in response to learning during the pandemic, and any new trends or circumstances as a result of the pandemic.

The scope of the strategy is wider than the services delivered directly by Burnley Council. It supports the delivery of the Lancashire Health and Well-Being Board, the work of East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group, criminal justice agencies and other public and voluntary sector organisations. It also supports the work which takes place through the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Homelessness Forum, and work across several District Councils in East Lancashire, who work together on some aspects of homelessness, as well as Lancashire-wide work through our County Homelessness Group.

We have used data, other information and feedback to review homelessness in Burnley, its causes and how this effects different groups of people in our communities. The findings from the review have shaped this strategy. You can read the whole review in Appendix One.

Our aim must be to prevent homelessness occurring in the first place – this is the best outcome for people. But it also makes good financial sense for the Council and other public sector agencies locally to prevent homelessness, because the cost of homelessness on services is high. Currently a lot of our focus and resources are spent assisting people once the crisis of homelessness has already happened. One of the most important questions for us is how can we turn that around and help people earlier?

We also need to break the cycle of repeat homelessness and assist those who become homeless to find a home and, if needed, offer them support to make sure they do not experience homelessness again.

A structured approach to preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping

The way we have structured the strategy broadly follows the Government’s 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy, which looks at actions in 3 domains or areas: Prevention; Intervention; Recovery. We have made our strategy relevant for all forms of housing need and homelessness in Burnley by borrowing from the structure of the St Basils ‘Positive Pathway’. This puts more emphasis on the earlier ‘Prevention’ elements and adds in a final element on housing supply to address move on options.

We want to encourage people to seek early housing advice to resolve any problems and this could be delivered through actions in Priority Area 1 or 2 in the diagram below. Some people who are homeless do not need to ‘recover’ from homelessness as they do not have any specific support needs, only a need for housing, so they might get help through Priority Areas 3 and 5.

The success of the structured approach set out in this strategy lies in partnership working, with the Council taking a lead, but with other key stakeholders working with the Council to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping.



The scope of the strategy

The strategy aims to ensure homelessness is addressed at whatever stage or circumstance people are in. It covers people who:

- Want or need general advice about housing options
- Are at risk of homelessness in the future
- Are already homeless
- Are rough sleeping
- Are staying in supported housing or temporary accommodation
- Are settling into their new home after becoming homeless

Links to other strategies and plans in Burnley and Lancashire

Burnley's Future: The Community Strategy for Burnley 2017 – 2020

Burnley Council's Strategic Plan 2020

Burnley Council's Housing Strategy 2016 - 2021

East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group Vision and Priorities

Lancashire County Council Corporate Strategy

Summary of our review in homelessness in Burnley

To develop this strategy, we conducted a review into homelessness and rough sleeping in Burnley during March, April and May 2020. A review is inevitably a collection and analysis of information taken at a moment in time. This review was undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic though much of the data pre-dates the pandemic. The longer-term impact of Covid-19 on housing and homelessness is not yet known and the strategy and action plan take the uncertainty about impacts into account as far as possible.

The review is attached as Appendix One to this strategy.

The summary of key points from the review were:

- Burnley has a lower proportion of social housing in comparison to other North West and Lancashire authorities.
- The Housing Register indicates that the most significant demand is for 1 bed social housing, followed by 2 bed social housing.
- Burnley Council has had success in its work with private landlords through selective licensing to improve landlord management and housing standards in some areas and this work is continuing.
- Some properties in the private rented sector are affordable for people on low incomes claiming housing benefit or housing costs. However, it is not always possible to find private rented accommodation for larger families which is suitable in some areas.
- There is limited general, easy to access information provided by Burnley Council or through other agencies on housing options for local people or where to go for advice or assistance.

- Single people approached the Council for assistance due to homelessness in significantly higher numbers than families between July 2018 and June 2019. This trend has continued in more recent quarters.
- 63% of people who were threatened with homelessness within 56 days were people with no dependents (single or childless couples) and 37% were families.
- 91% of people who were already homeless when they contacted the Council were single.
- The most common cause of homelessness is due to 'family or friends no longer being able or willing to accommodate', followed by issuing of Section 21 notices for eviction from a private rented tenancy.
- 28% of people said their address at the time of contacting the Council was no fixed abode, 21% were living with family or friends and 18% were living in the private rented sector.
- The Prison Service and the Job Centre were most likely to refer clients who said they were threatened with homelessness or homeless under the 'duty to refer.'
- When the 627 people who approached Burnley between July 2018 and June 2019 because they were homeless or threatened with homelessness were asked if there were any areas of their lives they needed support with in order to be able to live in their own home, 383 (61%) said they did have one or more support need. Of these, 151 (40%) had 3 or more support needs.
- In terms of the type of support needs identified, by far the highest was support with mental health issues, followed by drug dependency; physical health or disability; a history of offending ; repeat homelessness ; one or more nights rough sleeping; alcohol dependency ; domestic abuse; and being a young person. There were other support needs, which are shown in the review document in Appendix One, but the ones listed above were the major ones.
- The Council helped to prevent 59% of people from becoming homeless between July 2018 and June 2019, which is the same as the overall rate for the North West region and slightly higher than the overall rate in England over the same period.
- 14% of people were assisted to stay in their current accommodation rather than move to new housing. This rate is significantly lower than the North West (27%) and England rates (35%) for the same period.
- The Council helped to relieve homelessness for 48% of people between July 2018 and June 2019, which is higher than the overall success rate for the North West (44%) region and higher than the overall rate in England (41%) over the same period.
- There is a high level of 'loss of contact' recorded as a reason for the Council to end either the prevention (23%) and relief duty (38%).
- In terms of which groups of people might be at higher risk of homelessness, there is equalities data in the review. Some key points were that people who are in poor health and are not in employment are significantly over-represented in terms of homelessness. Men are at higher risk of homelessness than women. People who identify as British Pakistani origin may be under-represented in terms of homelessness presentations, but this is based on comparing data from 2019 and the 2011 census.
- The number of households placed in temporary accommodation under statutory duties has been low, with no significant rise. This means that, in usual circumstances, around 8 households at any time are in temporary accommodation.

Most of these households are vulnerable single people who are or may have a 'priority need' for accommodation under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

- However, over the period of Covid-19 lockdown, 33 households were placed into temporary accommodation. This was all single people who were at high risk of rough sleeping. 5 people were rough sleeping at the time, but 7 had been living with family or friend 6 were released from custody. The rest were either sofa surfing or had needed to move from supported accommodation and 1 person left hospital. Most of those placed were unlikely to have a 'priority need' for accommodation under homelessness legislation. 17 had an offending history. 20 of the 33 people were aged under 35.
- There is a gap in the range of local temporary accommodation options for people whose needs are complex. Whilst there is provision which is recognised as high quality and working well, it does not meet the needs of people who need a lot of support, including people who may be a risk to other people or to themselves. Some vulnerable people have stayed in bed and breakfast accommodation in a neighbouring authority as a result, where they have little support.
- There is some supported housing available for people who need it in Burnley but options are limited. One gap is resettlement support to assist people with managing when they are ready to move into their own tenancies.

Consultation

To be completed following consultation exercise.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires public bodies to have due regard of the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Burnley Council must have due regard for advancing equality, which involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The way in which services are delivered to people who are or may be homeless must consider and have regard for different protected characteristics. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This means that the design of policies and the delivery of services must include explicit consideration of equality issues and we must take action to ensure services are able to meet the diverse range of needs and these are reviewed regularly.

Whilst it is not only our legal duty to conform to the Public Sector Equality Duty, it makes good sense to ensure that services are provided appropriately and fairly to our customers in order to address homelessness amongst every group of people living in Burnley.

Monitoring progress in delivering this strategy

To ensure that we deliver against this strategy and update the Action Plan as needed over the next 4 years we will:

- Hold a session every 3 months with the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Homelessness Forum to share progress, ask for feedback and seek views on any possible changes
- Agree and set up reporting arrangements to Burnley Council Executive and Scrutiny Committee
- Hold meetings with people who have lived experience of homelessness to discuss progress and any changes

Priority Area 1: Universal Information and Advice: *Ensure everyone knows about the housing options available in Burnley, can help themselves or know where to go for help*

Why is this important?

Too many people are seeking help when they are already homeless. We need to reverse this and support people to plan ahead as much as possible, so they can live settled lives in local communities in Burnley and homelessness is not part of their experience.

The current model to address housing need which local authorities generally deliver is 'passive' not 'proactive'. We understand that if we plan all our services to be 'crisis focussed' we will always have crisis. Most of our activity and resources are currently directed to this area. If we plan more of our services to be 'earlier help' focussed, and encourage more self-help, we help to reduce the crisis of homelessness and the negative outcomes for individuals and communities that are the result of lives fractured by homelessness.

This priority area is about residents self-identifying their housing needs and planning their housing future through the support provided by local agencies, including the Council. The actions needed in this 'universal space' include making sure other organisations, like health services, Job Centre Plus and voluntary agencies, have a good understanding of the 'warning signs' of housing need including financial, employment and health factors, and that they can encourage self-help, give basic early advice, or contact the Housing Needs Service.

Management of expectations is important, in terms of what could be possible as housing options. Social housing is limited and there is significant demand for it, so for many it is an unrealistic option. We need to give people clear information so there is an increased understanding about the realities of housing options locally assisting people to help themselves whilst making sure they also know where to go for advice in the future.

What are the actions we can take to improve?

- Improve general information on Burnley Council's website about the housing options available, approximate costs, availability and how to access, for example:
 - Social rented housing
 - Private sector housing, including shared rented housing
 - Affordable rented housing
 - Shared ownership opportunities and the criteria to qualify
 - Older person housing
 - Lodging with a resident landlord
 - Moving in with family and friends

- Ensure Burnley continues to meet its legal duty to provide information on housing options, prevention options, advice and legal rights to some groups at higher risk of homelessness. This includes updated information for care leavers, people leaving custody or being discharged from hospital, victims of domestic abuse, former members of the armed forces and people with mental illness or impairment. Based on our equalities data, we will also add into this group young people and young men due to the higher rate of homelessness amongst single men

- Deliver general training/briefings with partner agencies who work in the 'universal' space, so other professionals and volunteers can encourage self-help, give basic advice and signpost people earlier if needed

- Try to reach young people early through providing relevant information to young people through on-line information, secondary schools and colleges

Priority Area 2: Targeted help: *Reaching people earlier if they are at risk of becoming homeless in the future*

Why is this important?

We need to try to identify and assist people at higher risk of homelessness much earlier than the statutory guideline, which is 56 days or less before homelessness is likely to occur. Our aim is simple – to avoid housing need becoming homelessness and rough sleeping altogether. When people become homeless outcomes tend to be poorer and costs to the Council and other agencies increase.

Actively reaching people at risk earlier is likely to become even more important because of the Covid -19 pandemic and the possible medium and longer term impacts of this, including a likely recession or economic downturn and impacts on the housing market.

If there are early signs of housing problems, the Council and other agencies can help to resolve these before homelessness becomes a real possibility. This might involve helping people to stay where they are or planning a move elsewhere.

In Burnley there are significant levels of deprivation evidenced through recurring themes in many services which support local people. Whilst anyone can become homeless, it is possible to identify people who are more likely to become homeless. Groups shown to be at higher risk of homelessness in Burnley include:

- Under 35 year olds
- Single men
- People on low incomes and those who are in debt
- People experiencing family or relationship breakdown
- People – mainly men - leaving prison
- People with a mental health illness
- People with substance misuse problems
- People - mainly women - experiencing domestic abuse
- Young people leaving the care of the Local Authority
- Refugees and people with no recourse to public funds

To reach people earlier, a strong partnership with other organisations is critical. Homelessness cannot be avoided by one agency or service alone taking action. If we are serious about reducing homelessness and ending rough sleeping in Burnley, we need every agency that has contact with people at risk of homelessness to play a part.

What are the actions we can take to improve?

- Create a whole Council and a Burnley-wide partnership commitment to prevent homelessness, including housing associations, public and voluntary agencies, private businesses and private landlords. Within this agree establish a ‘no wrong door’ approach.

- Encourage private landlords to call Burnley Council earlier for advice with arrears or anti-social behaviour issues with tenants, to prevent the threat of eviction
- Update and communicate protocols or referral arrangements and pathways with different organisations:
 - A 'pre-eviction protocol' with Calico housing association and other registered providers
 - A 'Leaving Care' protocol with Lancashire County Council and other district councils
 - The 16/17 year olds' protocol with Lancashire County Council and other district councils
 - A 'Prison Release' protocol with prisons and youth offending establishments, the CRC and Probation Service
 - The domestic abuse referral agreement between the Housing Advice Service and the Community Safety Partnership
 - The 'Hospital Discharge' protocol, to include in-patient mental health units
 - A 'Positive Decisions' protocol with Serco regarding people seeking asylum with leave to remain
 - The referral agreement with Inspire East Lancashire for people with alcohol or drug dependency
- Train Council officers and other agencies to identify the signs and symptoms that single people at high risk of rough sleeping might present with, to reach them earlier and offer more practical assistance
- Work with other District Councils and Children's Services to add into the regular homeless 16/17 year old meetings a focus on care leavers, so all young people who are leaving care or have left care but have housing issues can be discussed in a timely way with Children's Services
- Develop a new sanctuary scheme, which will enable victims of domestic violence and other forms of domestic abuse to remain safely in their own home after the perpetrator has left, through installing additional safety measures.

Priority Area 3: At the point of homelessness crisis: *Help to keep a home or find another one*

Why is this important?

Burnley needs to move to a more proactive, preventative approach, but we must ensure there is still an effective response for those who present as homeless in an emergency or crisis.

Crisis prevention and relief work is made up of a range of responses at the point where the threat of homelessness is imminent (defined as around 56 days or less before homelessness is likely to occur) or where someone is already homeless. In almost all instances, this work must take place under statutory duties set out in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as

amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

This means that where a homelessness application is taken and a statutory duty is owed to prevent or relieve homelessness, the Council must take 'reasonable steps' to assist the applicant in securing accommodation. This could be by 'retaining' the accommodation they already have, or if they cannot stay there, or are already homeless, then finding suitable alternative accommodation.

A 'Personal Housing Plan' must be created and is based on an assessment of the housing circumstances, housing needs and support needs that the applicant and anyone else in their household has. The 'reasonable steps' the Council will take, along with actions the applicant can take to help themselves, and any actions partner agencies will take must be set out in the Plan. It is important that where people can help themselves to resolve homelessness, the steps they will take are also part of the Plan.

The kinds of work this involves include:

- Negotiation and mediation with parents and family where there is a risk of homelessness from the family home
- Work with private and social landlords where they have issued a tenant with a notice to end the tenancy
- Planning with other organisations to assist people leaving institutions (e.g. prison, hospital, care) where there is no accommodation to move in to when they leave
- Provision of effective outreach services that contact people who are rough sleeping
- Options and advice for single people who are insecurely housed, sofa surfing and may be on the edge of rough sleeping
- Sanctuary schemes for adults and children affected by domestic abuse
- Provision of suitable emergency, short stay accommodation for some people

Homelessness can be either prevented or relieved through intervention at point of crisis; emergency accommodation is secured for those without other housing options; and there is coordinated action to prevent street homelessness and move people into accommodation.

A lot of data is already collected at this point through our casework management system and used to help understanding about causes of homelessness, which groups are experiencing homelessness and what is working well/not so well. This all assists in planning services with our partners.

What are the actions we can take to improve?

- Increase rates of homelessness prevention by training staff on use of prevention tools and actions. In particular, where there is a threat of eviction/exclusion from a family or friend's home or a tenancy, we need to improve targeted actions to prevent homelessness and help people to stay where they are and if needed, plan moves.

- Develop an offer for those still living with parents or family (i.e. newly formed households and some single people with support needs) to remain at home and wait for social or private rented housing rather than become homeless
- Develop an 'offer to resolve' package for work with private and social landlords, for all of the common notice causes: rent arrears, wanting a higher rent, alleged behaviour problems, rent gaps, landlord wishing to sell
- Develop a new Sanctuary Scheme, led by the Community Safety Partnership for people experiencing domestic abuse who can stay in their home with additional safety measures
- Hold partnership review meetings to learn from the new Outreach and Navigator Service for people who are rough sleeping, adapting services as necessary to reduce and eliminate rough sleeping in Burnley
- Develop emergency accommodation for single people who are rough sleeping, or at high risk of rough sleeping, through the development of A Bed Every Night (ABEN) in Burnley

Priority Area 4: 'Recovery' services: *Helping homeless people who are vulnerable, and need support as well as accommodation to recover so they can manage a home in the future*

Why is this important?

Our review has highlighted the extent and range of support needs, as well as housing needs, that many people who are homeless in Burnley have. For many people, homelessness is symptomatic of other issues in their lives – mental health problems, drug or alcohol dependency, offending behaviour and fractured support networks.

It is well evidenced that insecure housing and rough sleeping causes poor life outcomes. To recover, find and keep a home and end the cycle of homelessness, providing tailored and purposeful support is essential. This is particularly true for young people and more vulnerable adults, the majority of whom are single people.

We need a range of support options for people in Burnley that are recovering from homelessness and the issues that have led to this, to reduce any risks they face and help to increase the 'protective' factors in their lives.

The recovery from homelessness and the problems that have led to homelessness can take time. Support work needs to build up resilience and confidence and well as practical skills.

As well as having a home there are many other important factors to recovering from homelessness these include, knowing how to keep a home, good physical and mental health

and having a stable income. The importance of relationships and being part of a social network of people is often overlooked but can be essential for many people to recovery.

What are the actions we can take to improve?

We need to ensure the range of temporary accommodation and supported housing options better match the needs of people recovering from homelessness. This would be done through:

- Build on learning from the 'Everyone In' programme during the Covid-19 pandemic through a multi-disciplinary homeless, health and support needs assessment, as part of the 'Transforming Lives' work in Burnley to support vulnerable people.
- Continue to develop recovery options for people who are coming off the street through the Government funded 'Rapid Rehousing Pathway' work, those on the 'edge' of rough sleeping and other homeless people with support needs
- Develop short term self-contained leased accommodation options for people who have been rough sleeping or are at very high risk of rough sleeping
- Explore the development of a Housing First option in Burnley

Priority Area 5: Move on and support: *a range of options for people who are at risk of homelessness or who have experienced homelessness to move in to with support if needed*

Why is this important?

Homelessness, particularly amongst single people in Burnley, is exacerbated by limited access to suitable, settled accommodation. Developing sustainable housing options are a key part of the work in the next 5 years to reduce homelessness and move to a more prevention focused model of working. Simply put, without an increase of suitable options in both the private rented sector and in social housing, the current situation is likely to continue.

We need to create more options for single people before they are in crisis, which means they can avoid being insecurely housed and homeless and instead move in a planned way into suitable accommodation. Reaching people earlier to prevent homelessness, as set out in Priority Areas 1, 2 and 3 of the strategy, is critical but more housing stock needs to be available and accessible for people.

The wide range of needs of different households must be taken into account, including, for example, people with pets and those with high support needs who will continue to need housing related support.

What are the actions we can take to improve?

- Building on the work of Burnley Council's Good Landlord and Agent Scheme (GLAS) and the on-going improvements in the private rented sector through selective licensing, the Council will develop a new landlord incentive scheme for Burnley, with a number of different options that landlords can choose from. In particular this needs to increase the self-contained options in the private rented sector for some under 35 year olds who are recovering from rough sleeping and/or have complex needs and are assessed as unlikely to sustain accommodation in a shared environment
- Work with Calico to explore the development of more options for single people and childless couples, based on an agreed 'Tenancy Ready' approved programme