

Homelessness Review and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2023

Blackpool Council



Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2023

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Chapter 1: Executive Summary

The review of homelessness in Blackpool over the last three years shows that:

- Levels of homelessness in Blackpool that are three times the national average per head of population continue to be driven by chaotic lifestyles, social issues, and poor quality housing and not by an absolute shortage of housing. Most cases are single people who are not classed as being in priority need. A growing proportion of homelessness is precipitated by the violent breakdown of a relationship.
- Levels of homelessness presentations and rough sleeping have increased slightly over the last three years, although have increased at a lower rate than rising national averages.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation has increased but is still low compared with other areas; B&Bs are used only for occasional emergencies and for a few days at a time.
- The percentage of basic advice cases has reduced and more cases have been dealt with as prevention – indicating increased difficulty in households being able to maintain accommodation without support due to a combination of housing market issues, deprivation, and complex needs. But the number of cases where we have successfully prevented homelessness has increased and we continue to be able to help most people who need new accommodation to find it.

Strategically, reducing homelessness and helping people to establish themselves and maintain a stable home is critical to Blackpool's future prosperity, both for individuals themselves and the wider town. A stable home underpins successful education and employment and the maintenance of good health. Enabling people to stay in their homes and contribute to more stable communities is important to our aim of establishing flourishing residential neighbourhoods in inner Blackpool.

There have been cuts in funding to Housing Options, supported housing, and tenancy sustainment work but we have managed to continue to provide a wide range of services in the town. We are confident of successfully delivering the Homelessness Reduction Act's new duties from April 2018.

The strategy has three key areas:

- 1) Prevent people becoming homeless in the first place by working with partners to identify risk and intervene earlier
- 2) Resolve homelessness rapidly when crisis occurs, so that harm is minimized
- 3) Help more people avoid repeat homelessness by getting them back on their feet by providing long term solutions

We know that we still need to strengthen approaches to:

- Ensure that effective pathways to prevent homelessness are in place for all at risk groups
- Further develop and embed the "Positive Pathway" for young people
- Help ensure that staff across the homelessness system in Blackpool are trained in consistent therapeutic approaches, and focus on positive outcomes including employment
- Develop a more joined up offer of support with partners in substance misuse, mental health, social services, probation, and multiple and complex needs services

The priorities will be delivered through a new action plan to be developed with partner agencies.

Chapter 2: Introduction

The Homelessness Act (2002) places a statutory duty on each local authority to carry out a review of homelessness and develop a strategy every 5 years. While the last strategy was approved in 2014, the impact of new legislation – the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 – and fast pace of change means that it is important to develop a new strategy now to inform future activity in preventing homelessness in Blackpool.

This strategy is in 2 parts:

Part 1 – The review:

Part 1 contains a review of homelessness data and activity from 2013 to 2017 which seeks to establish the current picture of homelessness in Blackpool, including patterns and trends, and compares this against the previous strategy and also national data sets.

This section also contains a progress review on actions and objectives of the last strategy and an overview of the resources and services undertaking various levels of activity.

Part 2 – The Strategy:

Part 2 sets out the objectives and priorities for the life of this strategy, 2018 – 2021

The 2018 Homelessness Strategy focuses on how Blackpool Council and local partners will prevent and respond to homelessness by working in partnership.

The strategy will be delivered through an action plan which will be regularly updated so that we are able to respond to changes and developments in real time.

This is a particularly exciting time to be producing a new Homelessness Prevention Strategy as we are on the cusp of the implementation of most significant change in legislation in this field since the 1970's from April 2018.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY PART 1 – The Review

Chapter 3: National Context

This strategy is written at a time of considerable change within the homelessness sector.

The Homelessness Reduction Act will be the most significant piece of new legislation for homelessness services since 1977 and will commence from April 2018.

There are also a number of other key national policies and initiatives which will influence Blackpool Council's response to homelessness:

Legislation

Homelessness services are currently covered by the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the Homelessness Act 2002.

However case law often affects the interpretation of the above acts and there have been a number of significant cases since the last review, perhaps most notably that of *Johnson v Solihull* which effectively ended the era of the *Pereira* test and introduced a modified test of priority need.

There are also a number of key pieces of non-housing related legislation that have a direct impact on homelessness services to which we must have regard. These include the Children's Act, and since time of last strategy, the introduction of the Care Act.

From April 2018 the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will place duties on local housing authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness and to take reasonable steps to help those who become homeless to secure accommodation.

It requires local housing authorities to provide some new homelessness services to all people in their area and expands the categories of people who they have to help to find accommodation.

The Act changes the point at which a person is classed as being threatened with homelessness from 28 days before a person is likely to be homeless, to 56 days.

A new duty is placed on local housing authorities to assess all eligible applicants' cases and agree a plan.

There will also be a duty for other public services to refer cases to the local housing authority.

Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide (NSNON)

In its strategy "Vision for ending rough sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide" the Government has called on every local authority to adopt the No Second Night Out standard. There is recognition that every community is different, so how each one achieves this will be different. However, in the strategy the Government notes that this requires communities having right services in place, so that:

1. New rough sleepers can be identified and helped off the streets immediately
2. The public can alert services if they see anyone sleeping rough so they get help
3. Rough sleepers can go to a place of safety, where their needs can be assessed and they can get help
4. Rough sleepers are able to get emergency accommodation and other services they need
5. Rough sleepers from outside their area can be reconnected with their community¹

More recently local authorities have been encouraged to go one step further and consider adopting a “no first night out” approach which aims to predict potential rough sleepers and provide accommodation and support before a single night is spent on the streets.

Making Every Contact Count – “Gold Standard”

As a follow up report to a ‘Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out’ published in 2011, the Government’s Ministerial working group for Homelessness introduced a range of changes as set out in the report ‘Making Every Contact Count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness’, published in August 2012.

The report aims to ensure that every contact local authorities make with vulnerable people and families really counts, bringing together the Government’s commitment to:

- Tackle troubled childhoods and adolescence
- Improve health
- Reduce involvement in crime
- Improve skills, employment and financial advice
- Pioneer social funding for homelessness

The report details the ‘ten local challenges’ set by central Government:

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice
4. To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative
5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support
6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord
7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
8. To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs
9. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation

¹ http://www.nosecondnightout.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Reconnection-Guidance_29November11.pdf

10. To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks

These standards have since been adopted as the “Gold Standard” by the government funded National Practitioner Support Service as a way of evaluating services through peer review.

Welfare Reform

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a wide range of reforms aimed at reducing public expenditure on benefits and using the welfare system to incentivise people toward employment and to ‘make work pay’. A number of these have had an impact on homelessness and the availability, and sustainability, of affordable housing.

The key elements of reform include:

- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reductions including total LHA caps and the limiting of LHA to the 30th percentile of market rents
- The Total Benefit Cap - limiting the maximum benefits that a family can receive
- Spare Room Subsidy (‘Bedroom Tax’) reducing housing benefit entitlement to social housing tenants considered to be under occupying their homes
- The Shared Accommodation Rate limit applied to single young people up to the age of 34
- Transfer of responsibility for Social Fund payments to local authorities and to Council budgets
- Disability Benefit changes and the replacement of Council Tax Benefit with local Council Tax support, reducing benefit income to a wide range of working age adults
- Introduction of the Universal Credit to provide a single stream-lined benefit paid to residents directly rather than to their landlords.

The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 further reduced the benefit cap set by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 to £20,000 per year for couples and lone parents and £13,400 per year for single people.

Additionally under the Act, certain social security benefits and child tax credits have been frozen for four years from April 2016 and social housing rents have to be reduced by 1% per year for 4 years from April 2016.

Localism Act 2011

The stated policy objective is to enable local authorities to better manage housing demand and access to housing within the context of local circumstances. The key changes introduced by the Localism Act include:

- Local authorities are given the power to end their homelessness duty with an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector
- Social housing tenure reform to allow social landlords to grant fixed term tenancies with limited security of tenure
- The requirement for local authorities to set out their approach and response to fixed term tenancies in a Tenancy Strategy
- Social Housing allocation reform which allows local authorities to set allocation policies appropriate to the local area.

The Government introduced the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 as a guidance to respond to concerns about the standards of accommodation that may be used by local authorities as temporary accommodation, and to end the homelessness duty. The statutory guidance includes requirements about the quality of accommodation and of landlords, as well as the suitability of the location for a household's needs and circumstances.

Deregulation Act

The Deregulation Act 2015 introduced protection for private rented tenants against so called retaliatory evictions. Retaliatory eviction is where a tenant makes a legitimate complaint to their landlord about the condition of their property and instead of making the repair the landlord serves them with an eviction notice. All new Assured Shorthold Tenancies starting on or after 1 October 2015 will be covered by the provisions in the Act.

Housing and Planning Act

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 contains measures that could have an impact on social housing and homelessness including:

- the extension of the right to buy to housing association tenants
- local authorities will be required to sell their higher value homes as they become vacant, impacting on the supply of social housing
- local authority tenants with higher incomes could be required to pay a higher rent
- measures to tackle rogue landlords in the private sector including banning orders, a national database of rogue landlords and the extension of when a tenant can apply for a rent repayment order
- private landlords will be able to regain possession of a property they believe has been abandoned without a court order (a specific procedure is in place)

However, not all of these measures have been implemented by Government, with RTB for housing association tenants now voluntary, no announcement on whether or how "high value" Council homes will need to be sold, and Government confirming that it will not be compulsory for local authorities to charge higher rents to tenants with higher incomes.

Chapter 4: Local Context

Area profile

Blackpool lies at the heart of Lancashire's Fylde Coast, acting as the main service centre and commercial and leisure hub for the area. Blackpool's primary economic sector remains the tourist industry. Approximately 20,000 local residents are employed within the visitor economy during the traditional season, which extends beyond the typical British summer period and into early November, due to Blackpool Illuminations. Some of the UK's most well-known visitor attractions and companies engaged in the visitor economy can still be found in Blackpool.

Blackpool has a total population of 142,065 (Census 2011) which is made up of 49% males and 51% females. The ethnic background for majority of residents is 'White English' (94%) – census 2011. The town's socio-economic profile may be seen as challenging, as it suffers from high level deprivation across many areas. Of the 39,000 small areas of England (LSOAs) identified in the 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), five out of the ten most deprived were within the Blackpool Borough boundary. However, deprivation in Blackpool in the IMD "domain" of Barriers to Housing and Services was less severe than in the other domains because of the relative ease of access to housing in Blackpool, physical accessibility of services in an urban borough, and strong homelessness services.

In 2011, 30% of young people in Blackpool were living in child poverty, and 2012 educational statistics showed that less than 50% of students in Blackpool attained 5 A*-C grades at GCSE level, whilst 14.5% of the working age population had no formal qualifications at all. Skills levels are shown to be improving, though. Public health is also a key issue in the town, with most statistical indicators sitting below the national averages. The average life expectancy across the town is one of the lowest nationally, and health priorities for Blackpool include alcohol and drug misuse, mental health, smoking and obesity. The percentage of adults of a working age claiming Incapacity Benefit/ESA is approximately double the national average.

The Housing Market

Blackpool has an unbalanced housing market, characterised by an oversupply of poor quality one-person accommodation, limited choice of family housing particularly in the inner area, and while there is relatively easy access to accommodation in the private rented sector there is a shortage of affordable housing that is better quality. The concentration of small, poor quality housing in the inner areas attracts low income and vulnerable households, leading to high levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and unstable, fragmented communities with high levels of transience and homelessness

Tenure breakdown:

Authority	Owned Outright	Owned with Mortgage/ Loan	Shared Ownership	Social Rented	Private Rented: Landlord/ Agent	Private Rented: Other	Living Rent Free
Blackpool	30.3%	31.6%	0.4%	10.9%	24.2%	1.9%	1.1%
Inner Blackpool	17.2%	19.3%	0.5%	10.1%	50.0%	1.8%	1.2%

<i>Rest of Blackpool</i>	33.5%	34.9%	0.4%	11.1%	17.1%	1.9%	1.1%
England	30.6%	32.8%	0.8%	17.7%	15.4%	1.4%	1.3%

The proportion of Housing Benefit (HB) claimants who live in the private rented sector is the highest in the country at 73% of all HB claimants.

The household profile of this population is heavily skewed towards single people, with 55% of claimants receiving the Shared Room Rate or 1 bedroom rate of Local Housing Allowance. In the inner areas nearly two thirds of claimants are single person households.

The economic activity levels of Blackpool claimants on HB living in the private rented sector are lower than the national figure. Only 22% of these claimants are in employment as opposed to 36% nationally. The overall rate in some of the inner areas is around 12% (from DWP data Feb 2015).

Council plan

A new Council plan was published in 2015 to take us up to 2020, and this contains 2 clear priorities:

- Priority 1 - The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool
- Priority 2 - Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience

The Council Plan sets out the need to reduce demand for crisis services by facilitating prevention work that intervenes early to de-escalate problems before they become more serious.

Preventing and responding to homelessness are critical to delivering Priority 2, and mitigating the transience and instability that affects all other services. In line with the Council Plan, we aim to move more of our work to the earlier prevention stage to reduce the number of people who ever become homeless in the town.

Overlapping Strategies

It has been important within the review and formulation of the new Homelessness Prevention Strategy to have regard to a number of key strategies within the Council that may impact upon or complement this strategy:

These include:

- Blackpool Council Plan 2015 - 2020
- Housing Strategy 2018
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Early Help Strategy
- Housing Plan for an Ageing Population 2017
- Drug and Alcohol Strategies

Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer

Blackpool has been awarded Trailblazer status, for two years from April 2017, following a Fylde Coast bid alongside neighbouring Fylde and Wyre Councils.

This means that we will “become one of a network of Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer areas, to go further and faster with reform and support more people to avoid a homelessness crisis in the first place”.

For the Fylde Coast this means a more upstream approach to predicting and preventing homelessness across all client groups using a range of tools and interventions, and will form a key stream in the new strategy.

Blackpool Fulfilling Lives (BFL)

Blackpool is one of 12 areas in England that has received Big Lottery Fund funding to support people with multiple and complex needs. The programme started in September 2014 and will continue for seven years.

BFL engage and support people who are living with a combination of issues including homelessness, offending, substance misuse, and mental ill health.

Service users are at the heart of Fulfilling Lives. People with lived experience are closely involved in delivering the programme.

The ambition of the BFL project is, with the support of key partners, to deliver better pathways and services for people with multiple and complex needs through systems change.

As homelessness is a key element of multiple and complex needs the Council is committed to supporting the delivery of this work and is involved at both strategic and operational levels. BFL staff help support outreach to rough sleepers by the Council’s Housing Options team and offer additional support where there are multiple and complex needs. The Council is delivering a Housing First project enabled by funding from BFL with positive outcomes for people with histories of entrenched rough sleeping and hostel use.

The partnership around BFL provides a valuable opportunity to develop the expertise and coherence of services for the high numbers of people with multiple and complex needs in Blackpool, and ensuring that services are responsive to service users’ needs. Approaches to homelessness will be developed within this wider context.

Chapter 5: Review of Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014

Review of achievements

Objectives from previous strategy

Objective 1: Focus support on people with a strong local connection and discourage people requiring support from moving in to the area and accessing cross agency services.

Objective 2: Embed local connection in to all local authority strategies and policies

We have:

- Aligned housing related support funded accommodation with the social housing allocations policy, introducing a 3 year residency requirement for all services, with the exception of tenancy support
- Promoted a local connection approach to related services
- Continued commitment to working with people to return to their home area and support networks in a safe and managed way to ensure sustainable reconnection
- Established a joint reconnection policy with Fulfilling Lives
- Continued to promote the principles of local connection and reconnection at both strategic and operational levels to ensure the message remains relevant and consistent

Objective 3: Achieve a strong alignment of homelessness prevention with all services, providing support to vulnerable people, including statutory and non-statutory services and public and voluntary sectors

We have:

- Developed and delivered a ½ day Homelessness Prevention Awareness presentation for statutory and non-statutory services and agencies to ensure processes are understood and triggers are recognised
- Facilitated shadowing opportunities for a range of partner services and agencies
- Developed a network of link workers and referral processes within other services and agencies to ensure early intervention, planning and multi-agency co-ordination where required (e.g. Probation)
- Developed an accredited Tenancy Training Course, in partnership with Adult Learning aimed at educating residents on their rights and responsibilities as tenants

Objective 4: Support the improvement of housing and neighbourhoods within Blackpool

We have:

- Established and embedded the Tenancy Training Course for all Blackpool residents which aims to educate tenants on their rights and responsibilities, including around issues such as disrepair
- Continued to establish links with reputable landlords through BC Lettings (now part of My Blackpool Home) to promote good practice and property conditions and enable access to such for Blackpool residents in housing need.
- Created a wholly owned housing company – My Blackpool Home - (incorporating BC Lettings) to regenerate inner areas both by working with existing landlords and taking on a landlord function by buying, remodelling and letting formerly sub-standard accommodation
- Continued to challenge and report poor landlord practice and property conditions where appropriate
- Work in a co-ordinated way with other services (Enforcement, ASB etc) to build cases against rogue landlords and support displaced tenants
- Challenge the perception that poor housing is just something we have to live with in Blackpool and encourage other partners to do the same

Objective 5: Utilise the power given in the Localism Act (2011) to discharge the main homelessness duty into the private rented sector

We have:

- Established a procedure for discharging homelessness duties via a Private Rented Sector Offer
- Discharged approximately 12% of cases in this manner in 2015/16

Objective 6: Consider the potential effect of other local authorities discharging their homelessness duty cases into Blackpool Council

- Liaised with other services to raise awareness of this issue and request that such cases be flagged at the earliest opportunity
- Worked closely with our nearest neighbours (Fylde and Wyre) to request that temporary placements (i.e. in B&B) are rehoused in their home area.
- Challenged out of area authorities and agencies on inappropriate placements when these have occurred

Objective 7: Further develop prevention work so that it is more pro-active and provides assistance to people earlier

We have:

- Extended the Hospital Link Worker role
- Established protocols with prisons (Lancashire wide)
- Established local and early notification protocols with Probation Services

- Re-configured tenancy sustainment to a generic model that is person centred and has no waiting list
- Invested in a new IT system that enables officers to capture information at pre –statutory level which reduces duplication and enables better understanding of service demand.

Objective 8: Establish a coherent approach to dealing with the housing needs of 16 & 17 years olds

We have:

- Raised the profile of the Positive Pathway for young people within the town and secured appropriate buy in from key services
- Reviewed internal pathways to make best use of existing provision
- Facilitated a pilot for shared housing for Care Leavers
- Reviewed the role of the Mediation Officer

Objective 9: Ensure an effective approach to dealing with rough sleeping which balances “the need to unsettle” from a street homeless lifestyle whilst “never giving up on the most vulnerable”

We have:

- Developed a multi-agency Rough Sleepers Forum which enables effective information sharing and joint planning
- Through this forum developed with partners a support and enforcement approach which distinguishes between those genuinely rough sleeping and those that are begging
- Worked with a range of partner agencies (Streetlife, Horizons, Blackpool Fulfilling Lives) to maximise resources and deliver effective joint outreach
- Worked with partners to establish a consistent 3rd sector SWEP provision (St. Pauls Church) which is safe, cost effective and person centred.

Objective 10: Achieve an appropriate balance between effective support for those who need it and encouraging personal responsibility and accountability for continuing to make bad personal choices

We have:

- Worked with hostel providers to promote appropriate management procedures
- Worked with Public Protection, Community Safety, and the Police on issues associated with anti-social behaviour, both within tenancies and on the streets.
- Established a Tenancy Training course recognised by many providers as a reference and targeted at those with a poor tenancy history

Objective 11: Fully embed comprehensive housing pathways that enable people to move from homelessness to settled accommodation and from support to independent living

We have:

- Embedded single point of access within Housing Options which enables access to suitable accommodation for both priority and non-priority households, with planned and structured

move on pathways into either social housing or private rented with resettlement/tenancy support.

- Developed additional pathways for offenders in order to remove some of the barriers to accessing services (i.e. those who are High Risk and/or in Prison)
- Introduced the concept of the Positive Pathway for young people, which is now under further development with Children's Services
- Conducted a joint review (Housing Options and Commissioning) of the Tenancy Sustainment service to ensure it provides a robust approach to homelessness prevention and is able to support customers in the community with complex needs
- Funded an Employment Advisor within the Council's Positive Steps team to enable timely access to employment support for all customers accessing Housing Options and associated services

Objective 12: Provide access to quality housing options and support in the private rented sector as an incentive where people are committed to turning their lives around and taking responsibility for their own actions

We have:

- Continued to enable access to good quality private rented accommodation through BC Lettings (now part of My Blackpool Home)
- Worked with other providers of quality private rented accommodation to enable rehousing of customers with complex needs in the private rented sector with support
- Started to develop a Housing First model in partnership with Fulfilling Lives for customers with extremely complex needs who cannot access or maintain traditional housing options.
- Successfully resettled a small group of Syrian Refugees into the community via the private rented sector.

Objective 13: Provide an effective approach for dealing with service users who have been identified as high risk and where there is no duty to rehouse

We have:

- Ensured consistent representation at MAPPA meetings and been accountable for relevant actions
- Worked with partner agencies (Probation, CRC, Calico) to deliver creative solutions where there are gaps in provision
- Focused on providing access to independent accommodation with wrap around support which manages the risk within the community

Summary

Shortly after the implementation of the last strategy Housing Options experienced significant cuts in funding which resulted in the loss of several key members of staff and a radical restructure and change in approach.

But this has not affected performance against the objectives within the strategy, and the new generic approach is now fully embedded, ensuring that the service is highly efficient with a focus on prevention remaining at the heart of the service.

Although the majority of objectives have been met there are a number of specific actions which have not been achieved and remain relevant:

- Further work on educating other services on recognising the signs and symptoms of homelessness and developing pathways
- Continuing to develop and promote tenancy training, including a specific tailored course for young people, and work closely with landlords, tenants and partners to improve housing standards
- Continue to review processes and develop new ways of working, using examples of best practice from elsewhere
- Revise and review the joint protocol with Children's Services for the assessment of homeless 16/17 year olds.
- Continue work with young people and relevant services/stakeholders through Positive Transitions
- Continue to develop pathways and relationships with offender management services.
- Review supported housing and floating support provision and pathways
- Develop provision for high risk customers

These will be taken forward under the new strategy.

CHAPTER 6: HOMELESSNESS IN BLACKPOOL

6.1 Homelessness and Council Duties

Homelessness is a term that is used to describe various situations of housing need, and it is important to be clear about the different circumstances in which people are considered to be homeless. To summarise:

Statutory homelessness refers to those people who have made a homeless application and have met the criteria in legislation (Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Act 2002) to be accepted by the Council as eligible for assistance, homeless and in **priority need**. This includes families, pregnant women and single people who are particularly vulnerable. A household may be accepted as 'homeless' because they are going to be evicted or are living in accommodation so unsuitable that it is not 'reasonable' for them to remain there. The Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation to statutory homeless households.

Non-statutory/non-priority homeless people are primarily single people/childless couples who are not assessed as being in 'priority need' and therefore only entitled to 'advice and assistance' if homeless. However, the Council may exercise its "powers" to provide additional support if it chooses to do so.

Rough sleepers are people who are literally roofless and are bedded down on the streets, parks or other places where they may or may not be seen by the public. This group are a normally a minority of the much larger group of non-priority homeless people, with a larger proportion of single homeless people sofa surfing (often described as the 'hidden homeless' because we have no means to calculate their numbers). Housing legislation does not set out specific statutory duties to people sleeping rough, but there is a strong policy focus on this group.

6.2 Homelessness Applications in Blackpool ²

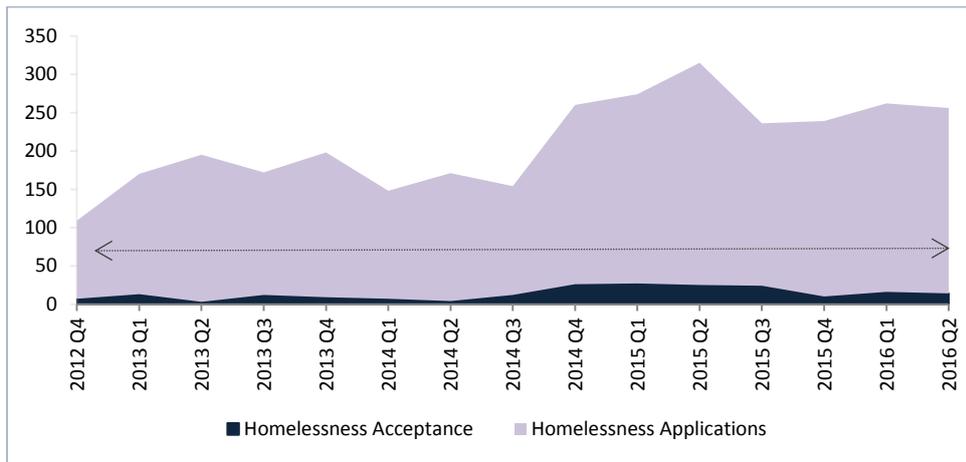


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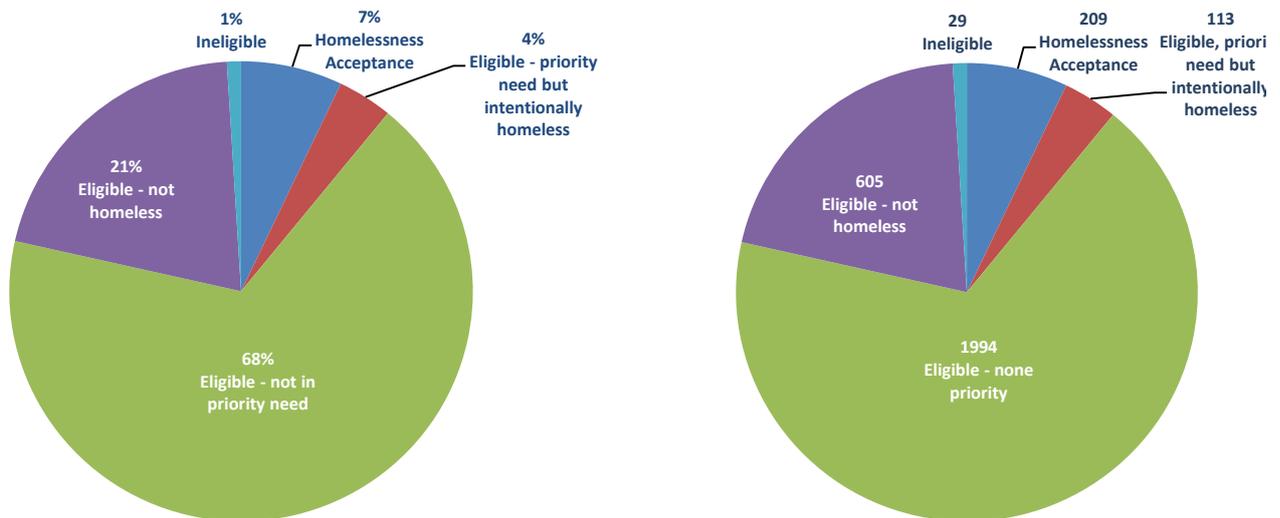
² P1E Data (January '13 – September '16) – Blackpool Council

³ Based on 2016 figures for applications received per 1000 household – NPSS <http://home.practitionersupport.org>

Homelessness Applications (Jan '13 – Sept '16)



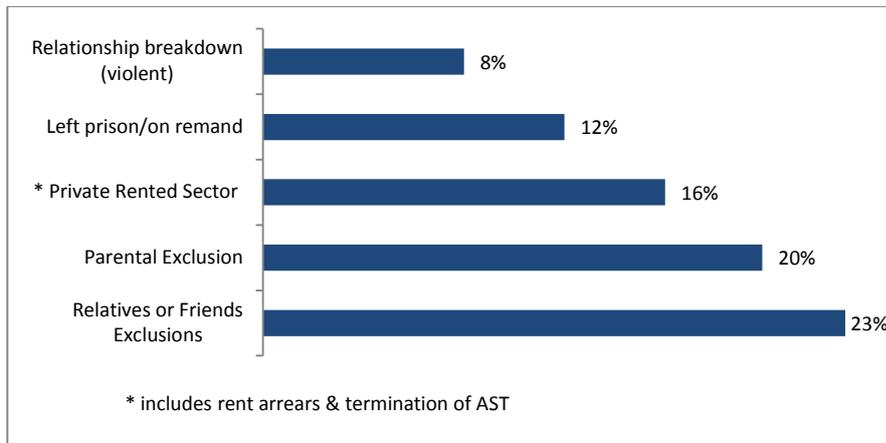
Breakdown of Homelessness Applications by category



To put this into some national perspective, in 2014/2015 Blackpool received 6.89 homeless applications per 1,000 of the local population compared to an average of 2.02 per 1,000 population nationally.

However the nature of homelessness in Blackpool is predominantly from single non-priority households and Blackpool only actually accepted the full statutory duty for 0.54 per 1000 as opposed to 1.07 per 1000 nationally in the same period.

Top 5 reasons for Homelessness (all categories) (April '15 – March '16)



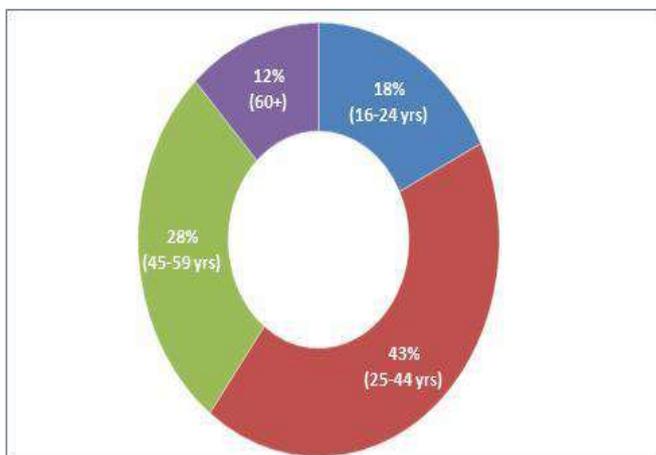
The above data represents the main causes of homelessness across all categories (statutory and non-statutory).

Nationally the main cause of homelessness is now loss of accommodation in the private rented sector; however in Blackpool it remains eviction by friends or relatives. This is still the second highest cause nationally so the picture is not significantly different, but perhaps reflects the high levels of transience and numbers of “sofa surfers” in Blackpool.

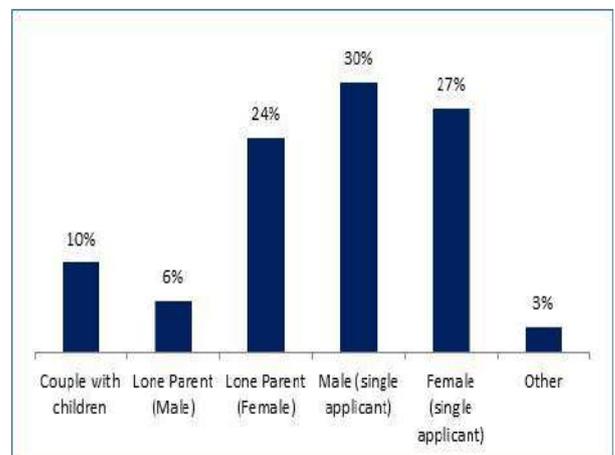
It should also be noted that nationally reasons for homelessness are only recorded for statutory households and so the comparison is not a direct one.

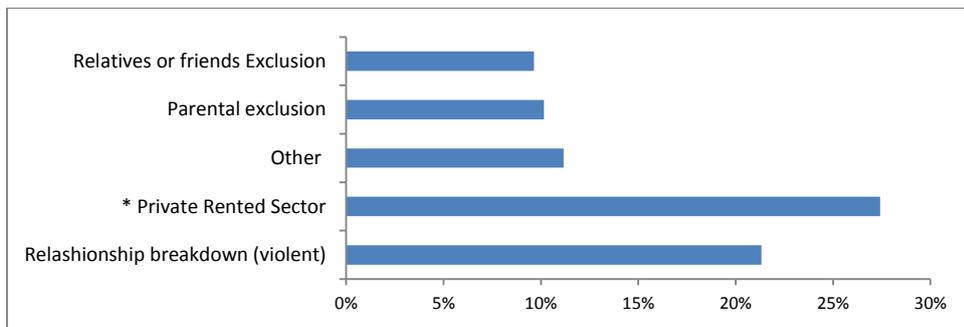
6.3 Statutory Homelessness in Blackpool

Eligible applicants (priority need) by Age Band (Jan '13 – Sept '16)



Eligible applicants (priority need) by Household Type (Jan '13 – Sept '16)



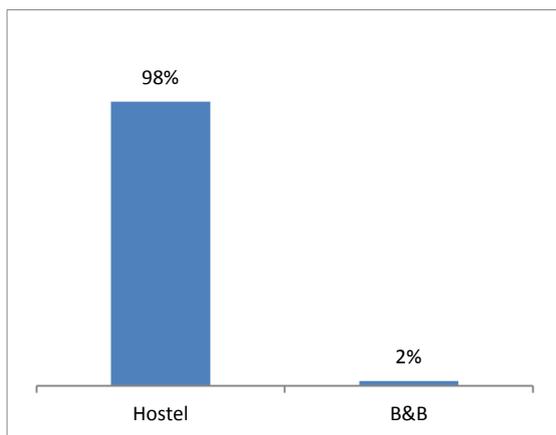


It is notable that when looking specifically at the main reasons for homelessness within the statutory groups loss of private rented sector accommodation is now the highest, which mirrors the national picture. However this is followed closely by violent relationship breakdown involving partner, which does differ from the national picture which sees an average of 12% in this category.

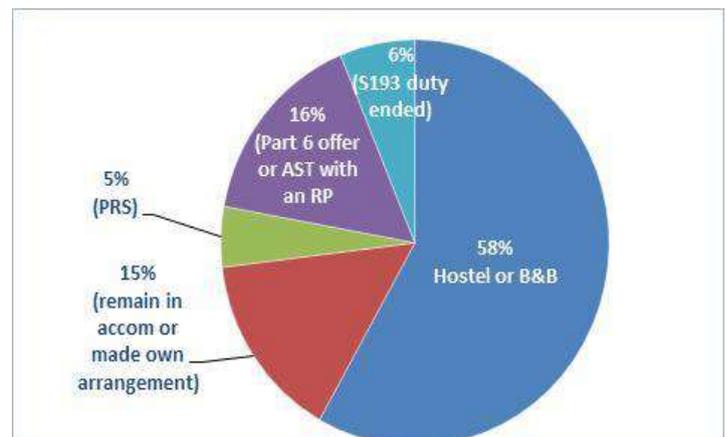
Interestingly though the North West average in this category is reported by NPSS as being 27%, so Blackpool lies somewhere in between.

6.4 Temporary accommodation and ending of duty

Accommodation at the point of initial placement (Jan '13 – Sept '16)

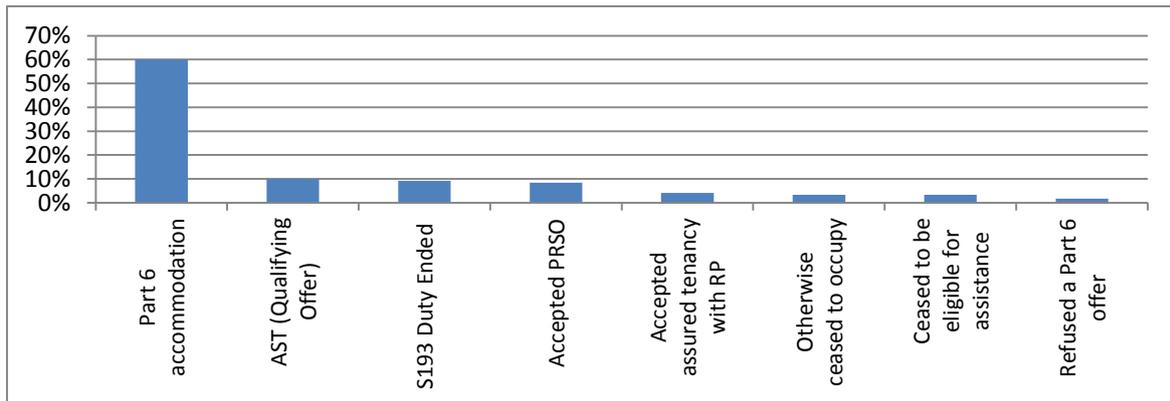


Accommodation at the point of acceptance (Jan '13 – Sept '16)



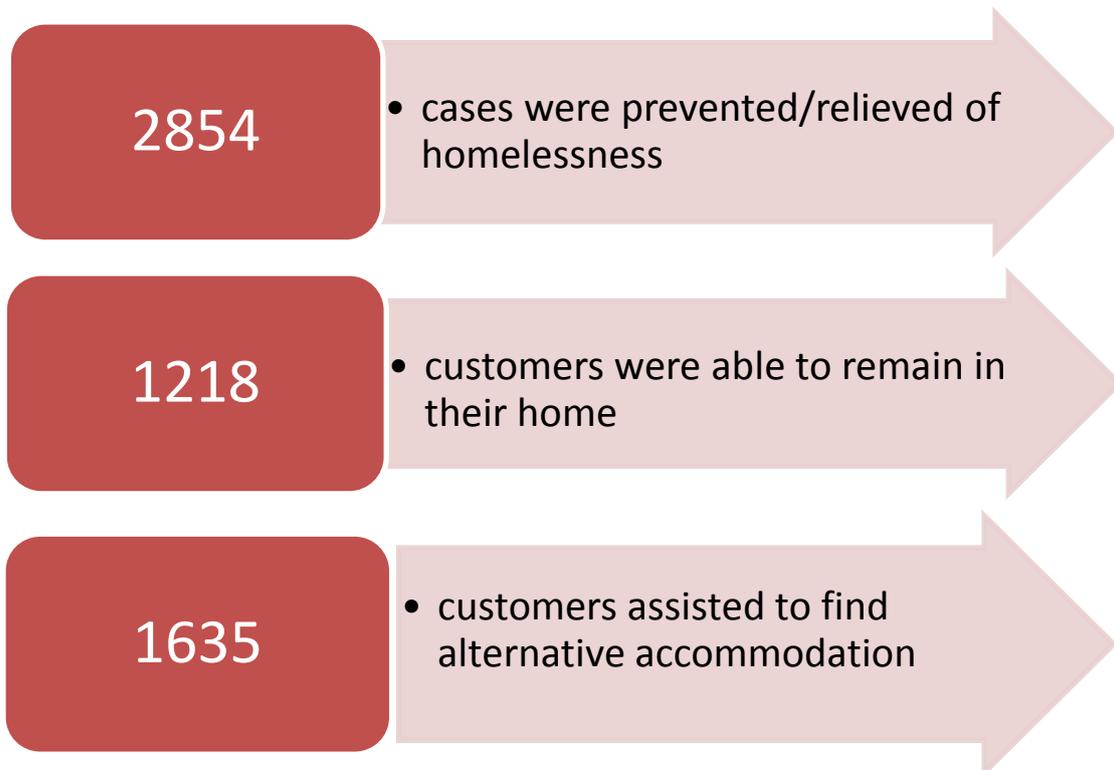
Average length of stay within temporary accommodation within the most recent year (2015/2016) was 65 days, with 98% of residents being supported to find alternative accommodation within 6 months of being placed

Ending of duty (Jan '13 – Sept '16)



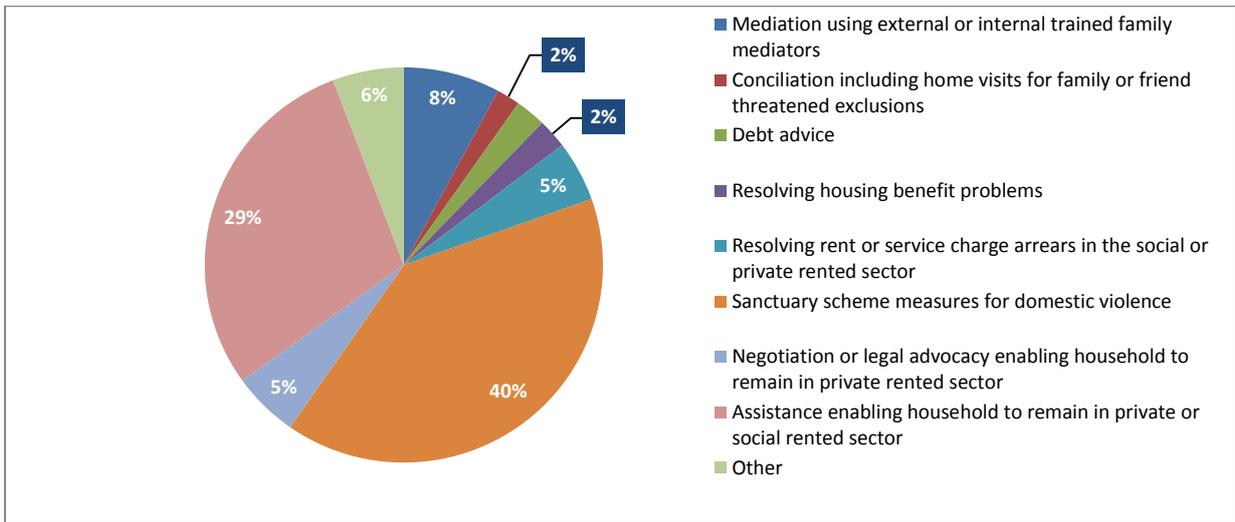
Blackpool embraced the powers in the Localism Act 2011 and has utilised the ability to discharge duty via a Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO). The table above illustrates that the majority of applicants within the period of the review have been rehoused into the social housing sector. However within the last year (2015/2016) 12% have been by way of a PRSO.

6.5 Prevention of Homelessness⁴



⁴ P1E Data (January '13 – September '16) – Blackpool Council

Prevention – able to remain in existing accommodation (Jan '13 – Sept '16)



The high levels of domestic abuse in Blackpool are reflected in the use of Sanctuary scheme measure being a key prevention tool.

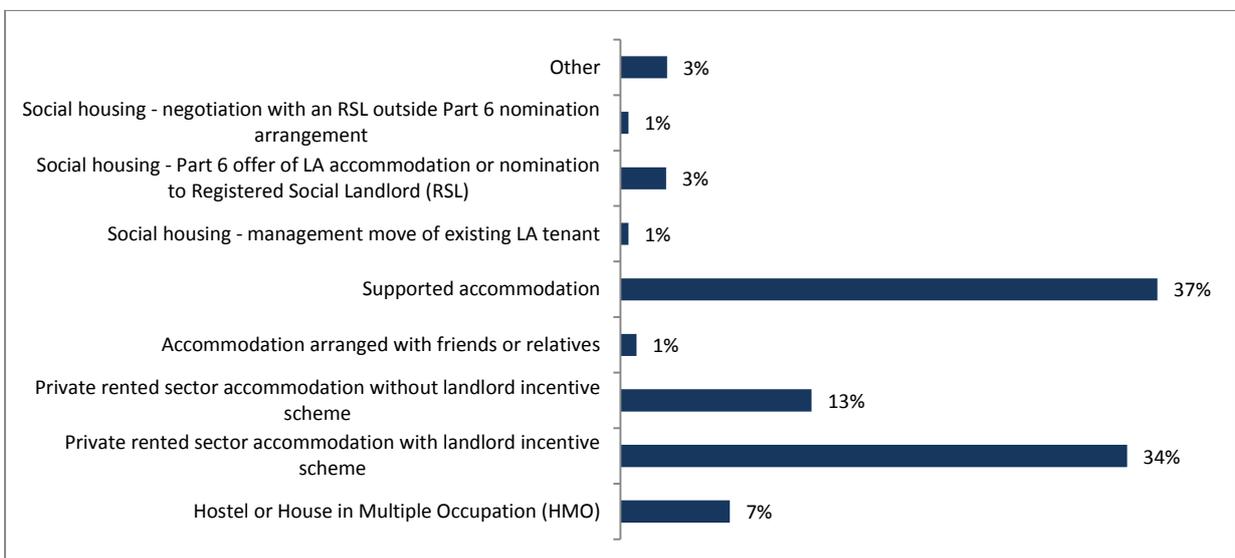
However much of the work of the Housing Options team is spent in helping people to retain their existing accommodation within the private rented sector. When adding these categories together this accounts for a total of 39% of prevention activity.

This includes the commissioned tenancy support service provided by Calico until July 2017 for which Housing Options acted as a gateway and triage service. This ensured that any crisis issues were immediately addressed and referrals for support were timely and appropriate with no waiting times.

Additionally there is a joint working process in place with the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) team, although data on how DHPs have been used to prevent homelessness has not been collated until recently.

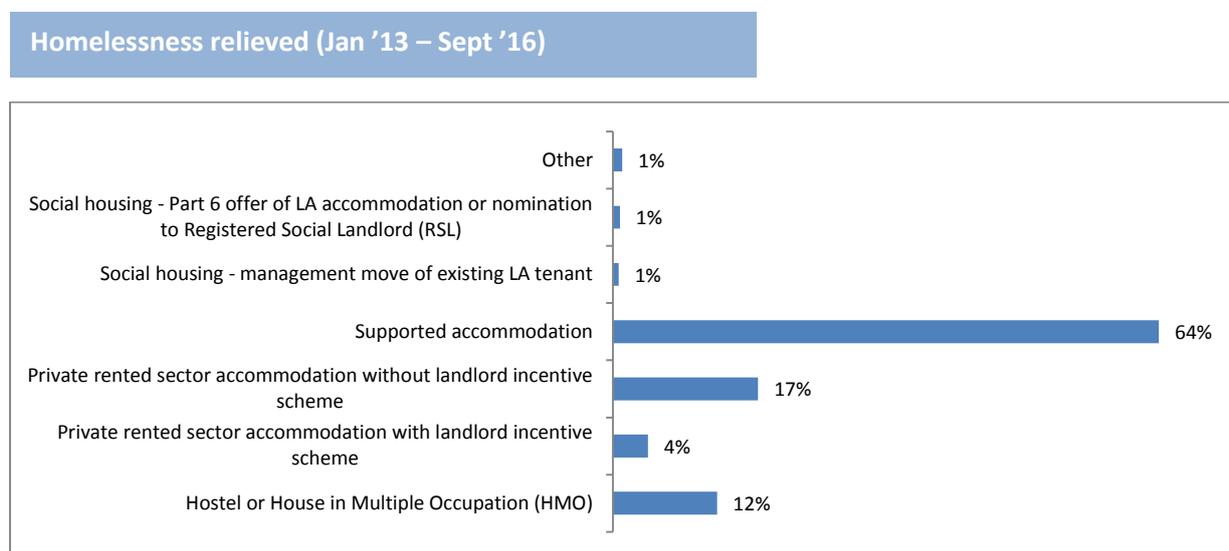
Although improvements have been made in data collection with the introduction of an IT system in 2014, there is still work to do in this area and prevention is still likely to be under recorded.

Prevention - alternative accommodation (Jan '13 – Sept '16)



BC Lettings (now My Blackpool Home) remains a key prevention tool and ensures that customers at risk of homelessness are able to access good quality, affordable accommodation in the private rented sector, with appropriate support to maintain their tenancy.

My Blackpool Home is a Council wholly owned company with a focus on regeneration but will continue to provide a much needed resource for households at risk of homelessness.



The high levels of use of supported accommodation, both in prevention and relief, reflect the nature of homelessness in Blackpool and the importance of the single point of access through the Housing Options team.

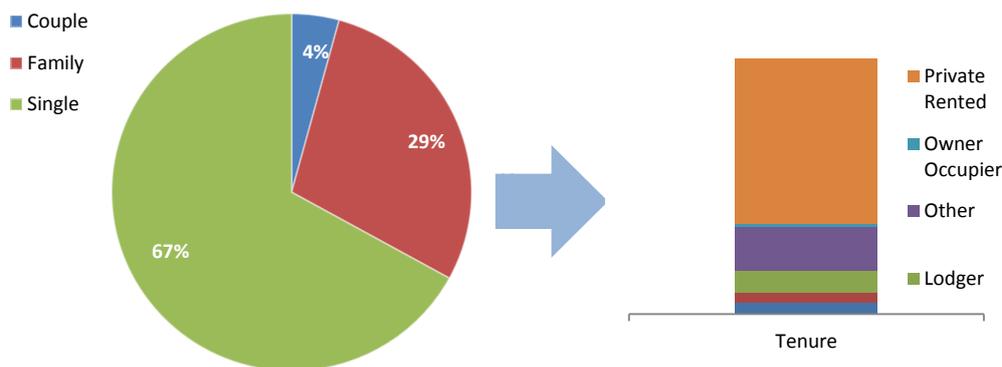
When considering earlier data on types and causes of homelessness we know that the highest concentrations of homelessness are from single people with no priority need, and the main cause of homelessness in this group is eviction from friends or relatives.

The high levels of transience and sofa surfing mean that without applying gatekeeping techniques we will inevitably we will see high levels of single homelessness.

There are a significant number of people in Blackpool who are vulnerable and lack the skills for independent living (reflected in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation) and so a provision of supported accommodation is vital; however this is often used more as “emergency” accommodation and people are able to move on quite quickly.

6.6 Housing Advice

The Council supported a total of 4,298 customers in the 18 months between April 2015 and September 2016, and of these, 1,236 received basic housing advice or guidance, compared with 1,466 triggering a full homelessness assessment and 1,596 receiving help to prevent or relief of homelessness.



Where we have been able to capture the resident’s tenure, the majority of residents receiving housing advice lived in the private rented sector, which is reflective of the local housing market.

6.6 Rough Sleeping⁵

- 125
 - individuals sleeping rough in 2015/16
- 11%
 - increase since last strategy
- 18%
 - repeat or "chronic" rough sleepers

Although the numbers of rough sleepers are not as high as might be expected in a deprived coastal town this is still a significant issue and the impact on tourism cannot be ignored.

Whilst there has been an increase in rough sleeping this has been a smaller increase than nationally due to a proactive outreach and multi-agency approach.

Housing Options also works hard to re-connect single homeless people with no local connection to their home area. This may be to their own accommodation, accommodation with family or friends, or to support services such as the local Council.

Approximately 1/3 of all single homeless applications are from customers with no local connection; and of these approximately 2/3 are successfully reconnected back to their home town.

⁵ * Based on rough sleepers count (April 2014 – September 2017) – Blackpool Council.
 ** Based on Outreach Work (April 2015 – September 2016), Blackpool Council

Conclusion – position since last review

It is important to bear in mind that this review covers a 3 year period, although where relevant the last 12 months' data has been highlighted to draw out the most recent trends. There are some clear patterns and conclusions we can draw:

Things that have remained fairly consistent:

- Low levels of statutory homelessness
- High levels of single non-priority homelessness
- Very low levels of B&B usage for families
- No B&B placements for 16/17 year olds
- Sanctuary measures, assistance with obtaining private rented sector housing with landlord incentive, and use of supported housing remain the key areas of prevention and relief.
- Proportions of prevention to homelessness remain roughly the same throughout the 3 year period; and overall levels of homelessness have stabilised.

However there are some changes:

- The second highest reason for homelessness is now violent breakdown of relationship (this was previously the 3rd highest)
- Rough sleeping figures have increased – although not at the rates seen nationally
- There was a gradual but significant increase in homelessness applications taken from 2012 to 2015. This peaked in Quarter 2 of 2015, marking a 50% increase in presentations since 2012, but has remained fairly consistent since this point. This is at least partly explained by changing procedures within Housing Options, and looking further back shows that the numbers in Q2 2015 were similar to 2010/11 and still lower than 2008/9.
- In 2016/2017 there was an 8% shift from homelessness to prevention – which is positive
- However equally in that same period the percentage of basic advice cases has reduced and more cases have been “worked” as prevention – indicating increased difficulty in households being able to maintain accommodation without support due to a combination of housing market issues, deprivation and complex needs.

CHAPTER 7: HOW WE RESPOND TO HOMELESSNESS IN BLACKPOOL

Housing Options

Since the beginning of the austerity measures Housing Options, along with a number of services in Blackpool, has experienced year on year cuts, the most significant of these occurring in 2011 and again in 2014.

In 2014 a radical restructure took place which fundamentally changed the way in which the service was delivered. The service was streamlined and now has a team of generic officers who deal with everything from basic advice and assistance, to full homelessness assessments, and also applications for social housing. This allows for greater consistency and efficiency with customers normally only having to tell their story once.

To complement the new approach the reception area was also completely refurbished in 2014 to create a more welcoming environment for customers introducing a mixture of private and semi-private assessment areas, comfortable seating, access to IT and telephony, children's toys and plants.

Housing Options have consciously made the decision not to invest in automated self-assessment tools as it is felt these are a method of gatekeeping which creates a barrier between customers and professionals, and face to face contact is a much more effective method in preventing homelessness.

Additionally Housing Options have resisted embracing gatekeeping practices and will assist a customer at any stage if there is a potential risk of homelessness rather than advise people to come back later, and if an application is triggered staff are empowered to follow due process.

A range of services are currently available from Housing Options which effectively creates a "one stop shop" for anyone in housing need:

Statutory Responsibilities:

- Provide housing advice to all
- Determine homelessness applications within statutory framework
- Provide temporary accommodation to those owed a duty
- Provide long term housing to those owed a duty
- Assess and process applications for Social Housing within statutory framework (Allocations Policy)
- Provide statutory returns relating to homelessness and prevention (P1E) to Central Government
- Investigate and prosecute landlords where appropriate (e.g. illegal evictions)

Homelessness prevention:

- Mediation for young people (mainly 16-17 but can go from 15 – 19 in certain cases)
- Negotiation with landlords
- Mortgage, Debt and benefit advice
- Resolving Housing Benefit issues
- Tenancy Sustainment support
- Assist with court paperwork and intervene where necessary
- Interventions within supported housing to prevent evictions

Accommodation options:

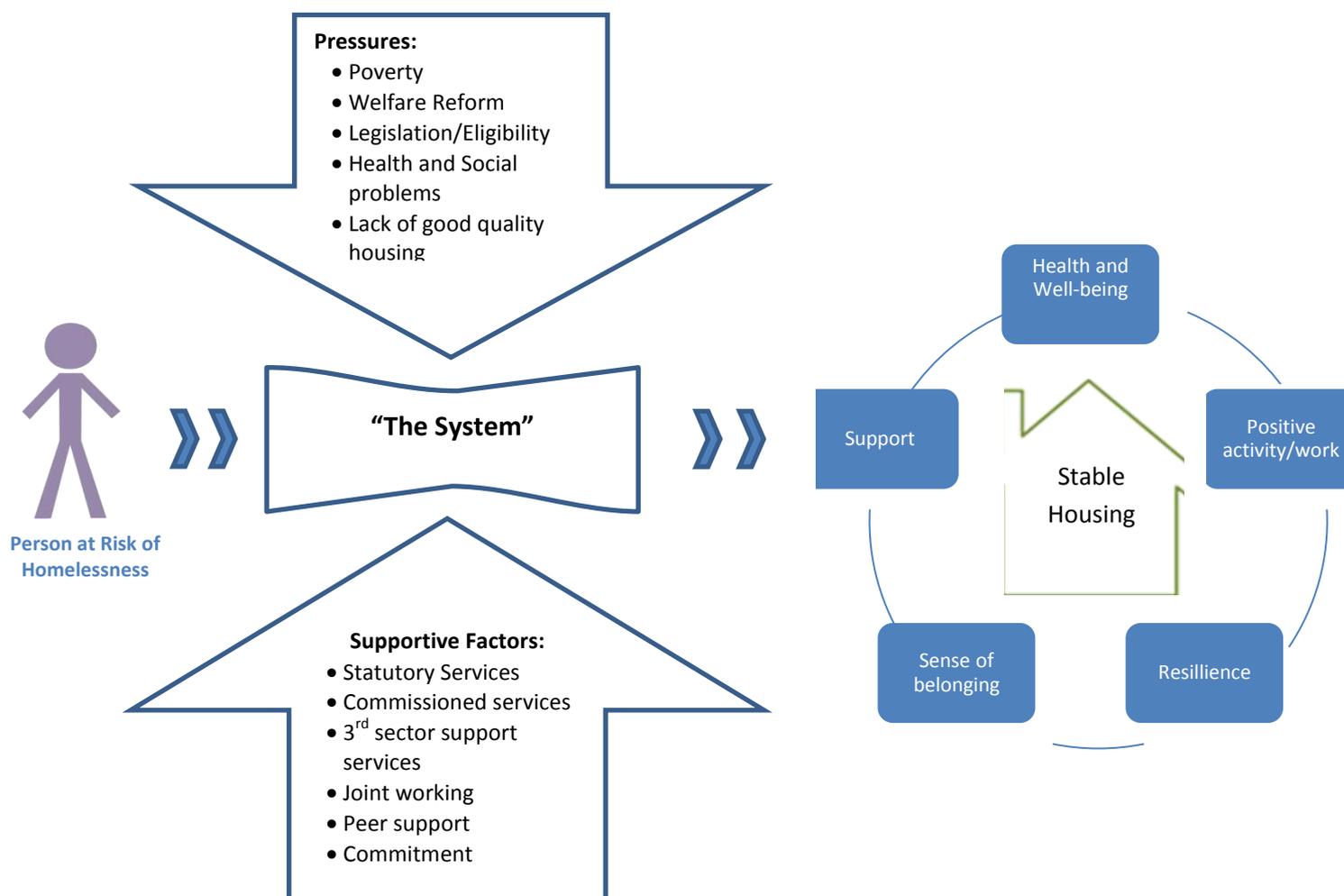
- Access to supported housing (range of providers)
- Facilitate temporary accommodation provided by BCH (priority homeless households)
- Single point of access for all social housing in Blackpool (and Fylde and Wyre) via the sub regional housing register *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast*
- Access to good quality affordable private rented housing through My Blackpool Home (Council wholly owned housing company)

Other services:

- Hospital /Health link worker
- Street Outreach
- Responsibility for the Council's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol
- Multi Agency working, referrals, and signposting
- Homeless prevention awareness raising/training for professionals
- Enforce Council's local connection policy and provide a re-connection offer to home area for those with no local connection
- Tenancy Training course "Key to Your Home"
- Access to Employment Advisors

Housing Options is just one part of a wider system that supports people at risk of homelessness in Blackpool:

The Homelessness System



Partnership Working

In order to alleviate the pressure on the system and increase the supportive factors, strong partnership working is critical. The Council cannot tackle homelessness alone and homelessness itself is rarely just a “housing issue”.

The issues that lead to homelessness in Blackpool are the same issues that are addressed by a number of services and agencies – homelessness is one symptom of a cocktail of transience, poverty, and social problems. So it is essential that services work together effectively to address these issues holistically.

Blackpool has an array of excellent services, and both staff and volunteers, who are passionately committed to reducing homelessness and the associated issues.

Housing Options partners include a range of internal and external stakeholders.

Internally key stakeholders include colleagues in Adult Social Care, Children’s Social Care, Public Protection, Community Safety, Public Health and Benefits.

Externally key stakeholders include:

- Blackpool Coastal Housing (the Council’s ALMO)
- My Blackpool Home (the Council’s Housing Company)
- Social Housing Providers
- Supported Accommodation Providers – both commissioned and non-commissioned
- Blackpool Food Partnership and Food Bank
- Local churches and soup kitchens
- Fulfilling Lives - lottery funded project to work with those with most complex needs
- Local drug and alcohol services
- The Police
- Probation Services – both NPS and CRC
- Shelter

Pathways and multi-agency approaches

Our commitment to partnership working has enabled us to successfully implement a number of key pathways and solutions.

These include:

- Offender Pathways – joint working with National Probation Service to identify offenders at risk of homelessness prior to release
- Rough Sleepers – multi agency targeted response to understand the demands of the client group. Enables partners to identify those that are genuinely homeless (as opposed to street drinkers/beggars) and provide effective and holistic solutions.
- Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) – partnership working with local church/soup kitchen using volunteers to deliver the town’s SWEP.

- *MyHomeChoiceFyldeCoast* (Choice Based Lettings Scheme) – partnership of main social landlords across the Fylde Coast. Applications to the scheme are processed by the Housing Options team for the whole Blackpool area.

In addition, there are a number of key multi agency working groups that enable coordinated responses to protect and support people at risk of homelessness among other issues:

- MARAC – domestic abuse
- ASBRAC and ASB Working Group – anti social behaviour
- Fulfilling Lives – Strategic Board and Operational Group
- MAPPA – public protection
- Child protection conferences and team around the family meetings
- Early Help Sub Group - joint working with Children’s Social Care
- Blackpool Young People’s Service/YOT Board

Cross Boundary working and innovation

More recently a series of opportunities to work with neighbouring authorities has resulted in us being able to attract additional funding to Blackpool and share best practice.

These include:

- Help for Single Homeless Fund (2015-17) - Joint work with local authorities in Fylde, Wyre, Preston and Lancaster to develop innovative solutions to assist single (non-priority) homeless households.
In Blackpool this included the development of the Tenancy Training course, which is now funded by Adult Learning
- Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer (2017-2019) - Work with local authorities in Fylde and Wyre, using an additional £600,000 over two years for upstream prevention and innovation across the Fylde Coast.
- Domestic Abuse Accommodation (2017) - Lancashire wide bid to secure accommodation-based wrap around support, including access to employment, for DA victims with complex needs.
- More Positive Together (2017-19) – European Social Fund programme across Lancashire to provide access to education training and employment for tenants furthest away from the jobs market, via housing stabilisation and support. In Blackpool, More Positive Together work is led by Blackpool Coastal Housing and also includes Great Places.
- Fulfilling Lives Multiple and Complex Needs – This Big Lottery Fund programme has a funding allocation of £10 million over 7 years, and has been operational since September 2014. The programme partnership has made available funding to introduce a Housing First project in Blackpool from 2017.

Resources and value for money

The Housing Options budget is made up of core Council funding and funding from the Housing Revenue Account in respect of maintaining systems to access social housing. The core budget for Housing Options has reduced incrementally over the last 5 years, but especially by around a third from 2014/15.

The Housing Related Support budget, which funded supported accommodation and floating support was cut in 2014 and then ceased in October 2017. This has led to the loss of a commissioned Tenancy Sustainment service and the loss of some supported housing, with other providers struggling under increased financial pressure.

More positively, the successful Trailblazer bid has resulted in new resources being made available for 2 years to March 2019 to maintain a specialist Health Link Worker and establish new Tenancy Support provision.

Other new funding opportunities include:

- The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant – recently allocated on a new national formula that provides resources to Blackpool Council for the first time from 2017/18, and ring fenced to help reduce homelessness for at least the first two years.
- Homelessness Reduction Act New Burdens funding – £40-50,000 p.a for three years but not ring fenced.
- Discretionary Housing Payments – This essential localised fund to assist applicants eligible for housing benefit with additional housing costs has continued to be funded at consistent levels by Government.
- Housing Benefit funding for supported housing – still in consultation at time of writing but new localised funding arrangements are expected to be in place from April 2020

The introduction of the new duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act from April 2018 will place significant new burdens on Local Authorities and so it will be critical for national and local funding commitments to be secured before implementation in order for the Council to meet its new duties.

The Housing Options service currently represents good value for money with the average prevention case costing the public purse approximately £560, compared with the national average of £800. Despite a reduction in the core budget of around a third since 2011, a good service has still been maintained to similar numbers of people at risk of homelessness with increasingly complex needs.

As Blackpool already has prevention focused services, adapting to the new legislation may not be as challenging as in some areas; but we anticipate an increase in terms of both footfall created by the duty to refer, and case management with the introduction of personal action plans. In Wales the introduction of similar new duties led to the need for a 25% increase in staff numbers to manage the new burdens. The primary means of resourcing additional duties will be to make use of the new Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and New Burdens funding.

For supported housing providers, the Government's planned move from higher rate Housing Benefit payments to new local funding allocations through the local authority from April 2020 will be a fundamental change in the funding model. The level of funding awarded to Blackpool is yet to be determined, but the change represents an important opportunity and responsibility to review local needs and agree a new support strategy for the town.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY PART 2 – The Strategy

The Scope:

The strategy focuses on three key areas, and is set within the context of the Homelessness Reduction Act:

- 1) **Prevent people becoming homeless in the first place by working with partners to identify risk and intervene earlier**
- 2) **Resolve homelessness rapidly when crisis occurs, so that harm is minimized**
- 3) **Help more people avoid repeat homelessness, getting them back on their feet by providing long term solutions**



It is equally important to ensure strong approaches in all three areas, but we aim to reduce the need for crisis resolution and recovery by providing support to more people at the prevention stage. The findings from the review indicate the following key pressures and challenges in working in these key areas:

- Domestic Abuse is the second highest reason for homelessness in Blackpool and there is a distinct lack of suitable accommodation for complex needs victims
- Rough sleeping has increased and this requires a proactive and continuous targeted approach
- There is still some work to do upstream to increase the proportion of customers whose homelessness is prevented, to those whose isn't.
- There are an increasing proportion of clients presenting with multiple and complex needs, who require a holistic approach

- The poor quality private rented sector and low wage economy continues to drive transience and deprivation, which directly impacts on the levels of homelessness.
- There is very limited budget provision for supported housing locally, and the national funding mechanism remains unclear.
- The Homelessness Reduction Act will bring further challenges in respect of new ways of working and increased demand for advice, support and accommodation.

There are, however, a number of strengths and opportunities which will support Blackpool to achieve its ambitions:

- Blackpool already has a prevention focus and provides support to non-statutory groups so the principles of the Homelessness Reduction Act will be relatively easy to adopt, and new funding should mitigate against the impact of increased workloads
- Housing Options has a relatively stable team of motivated experienced officers which enables organisational resilience.
- There are strong partnerships in the town with other statutory and non-statutory services, that enable us to pool resources
- There is a strong and co-ordinated 3rd sector response which provides vital additional services to homeless people, particularly rough sleepers
- There continues to be a large supply of private rented accommodation that is accessible to people who need to find a new home, with the team at My Blackpool Home (formerly BC Lets) working to ensure that homes are better quality
- Blackpool, with partners across Lancashire, has recently been successful in bidding for funds to secure accommodation based wrap around support, including access to employment, for Domestic Abuse victims with complex needs.
- The More Positive Together project, managed by Blackpool Coastal Housing, will provide access to education training and employment for those furthest away from the jobs market, whilst stabilising the living conditions of tenants both in the social and private rented sector
- The development of Blackpool Young People's Service allows an opportunity to support young people at an earlier stage through robust joint working arrangements and the application of the Positive Pathways model

There are also particular opportunities as a result of Blackpool Council working in partnership with Wyre and Fylde Councils as part of a national network of Homelessness Prevention Trailblazers, who are charged by Government, in advance of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), with "going further and faster with reform to homelessness services, and preventing more homelessness up stream".

The Trailblazer activity, which takes us up to 2019, includes 6 key work streams which directly relate to the three key focus areas:

1. Raise awareness of the signs and impacts of homelessness within other public services
2. Early Identification and tracking of housing issues across the Fylde Coast
3. Further develop access to the private rented sector in Fylde and Wyre
4. Better accommodation options for all individuals, regardless of statutory duties
5. Meaningful housing support for people with multiple and complex needs
6. Create pathways from homelessness to education, training and work

This strategy will help deliver the Council's priorities within the Council Plan:

Priority one - The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool

Social and economic drivers are clear factors in the high incidence of homelessness in Blackpool. But delivering effective support to prevent and relieve homelessness has an important role to play in supporting the local economy.

Reducing transience and rough sleeping has a direct positive impact on the local visitor economy which remains the town's largest economic sector.

Homelessness services also have an important role to play in driving forward regeneration and helping to tackle the issues associated with the private rented sector. We can only bring about sustained improvements to make areas more attractive by combining physical changes with people-focused interventions that help strengthen the local community and promote more positive lifestyles.

As we take a more holistic approach to dealing with the issues in individuals' lives that can precipitate homelessness, we are looking to help people to find more meaningful activity and in time find work. A crisis event like the threat of homelessness can be an important opportunity for people to be open to accepting support and looking for work, so it is important for homelessness services to be working hand in hand with employment support services.

Effective homelessness prevention services also reduce costs to other public services. Examples include providing accommodation for an estranged 17 year old who might otherwise be accommodated by Children's Social Care, or accommodating an older person in adapted accommodation which reduces the need for an extensive package of care. An average person rough sleeping over 12 months is estimated to cost the public purse in the region of £24,000 through additional local authority, health and police service costs.

Priority two - Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience

In trying to create stronger communities it is essential that we tackle homelessness, and the causes of homelessness.

The impacts on health and health services are significant:

- 41% of homeless people reported a long-term health problem compared with 28% of the general population.
- 45% had been diagnosed with a mental health problem compared with 25% of the general population.
- 36% had taken drugs in the past compared with 5% of the general population
- 77% are regular smokers compared with 20% of the general population
- Accident and Emergency visits per homeless person are four times higher than for the general public

And in relation to children and families:

- Homeless children are two to three times more likely to be absent from school than other children
- Children in unfit and overcrowded homes miss school more frequently due to illnesses and infections.
- Homeless children are more likely to have behavioural problems such as aggression, hyperactivity and impulsivity

There are also impacts on criminality with offenders who are homeless being almost twice as likely to be reconvicted in the first year after release, compared with those with stable accommodation.

The key therefore to avoiding both ruined lives for the individual, and escalating costs to services, has to lie in prevention and rapid response, and building resilience with those at risk of homelessness, so that they are able to play a full and productive role in their community.

Objectives

Under the 3 key focus areas sit a number of objectives that make up the body of the strategy and direct the action plan.

Focus Area 1 – PREVENT

Prevent people becoming homeless in the first place by working with partners to identify risk and intervene earlier

Homelessness has a knock on effect on people's lives and life chances resulting in an increase in negative health outcomes, school attendance and even offending. The power of decent accommodation and timely intervention cannot therefore be underestimated.

In order to stem the tide of increasing homelessness we need to tackle the underlying issues of poverty and the social factors associated with this.

Objectives under the focus area:

- Raise awareness with other agencies of early signs of homelessness
- Analyse where demand originates from to ensure pathways are in place for all at risk groups.
- Ensure pathways to work are embedded in all homelessness services, including those offered by 3rd sector partners
- Provide an appropriate range of accommodation, support, and advice for all young people, not just those who are homeless
- Ensure clear and integrated housing pathways are in place with Blackpool Young People's Service and ensure that the Council is safe from legal challenge following the Southwark ruling so that 16/17 year olds presenting as homeless receive an effective response
- Actively target customers known to have a history of repeat homelessness and use strength based and psychologically informed techniques to "break the cycle" helping them to access and maintain appropriate accommodation
- Adopt "no first night out" principles to prevent rough sleeping

Examples of actions associated with this Focus Area

- Awareness raising with internal and external stakeholders around initial signs and symptoms of potential homelessness and respective duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act
- Referral pathways/joint processes in place with public services to facilitate the “Duty to Refer” and enable demand to be managed.
- Pathways for all key at risk groups in place, including, but not limited to, those listed within the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Joint working with More Positive Together to build pathways from homelessness to work
- 16/17 year old joint protocol in place and integrated into Blackpool Young People’s Service.
- Housing provision for young people continually monitored and developed through the Positive Transitions Steering Group.

Focus Area 2 – RESOLVE

Resolve homelessness rapidly when crisis occurs, so that harm is minimized

It is relatively easy to arrange for a roof over someone’s head to relieve immediate homelessness in Blackpool. We have a strong service that can help most residents who find themselves homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act is likely to lead to even more demand, so it is important to further strengthen systems and access to accommodation.

But it is increasingly difficult to house people with a history of unacceptable behaviour, and we know that appropriate support and help to address destructive habits is the only way to get people settled.

We also continue to see thousands of people arriving in Blackpool each year at a time of crisis in their lives looking for somewhere to escape to. For many people who already have chaotic lives, coming to a new town that already has a number of entrenched social issues with no family or support networks, only exacerbates their problems. We maintain a robust disconnection policy to help get people back home but cannot make people return. One indicator of this is that the majority of rough sleepers in Blackpool have no local connection.

Objectives under the focus area:

- Ensure that both families and single people can access decent quality emergency accommodation when it is needed and ensure the quickest possible transition to a permanent new home
- Further improve access to quality private sector accommodation through My Blackpool Home
- Revise and improve access to social housing through the My Home Choice system
- Develop appropriate accommodation and support options for those with multiple and complex needs, working with a range of partners to provide holistic solutions
- Enable staff to respond more fully to chaotic service users when they are open to change (“windows of opportunity”)
- Review the supported housing needs within the town and work to ensure an adequate supply of quality accommodation when the new funding framework is introduced in April 2020
- Continue to work closely with the Benefits team to ensure the best use of Discretionary Housing Payments
- Further develop partnership working to address rough sleeping and begging, maintaining a coherent mix of enforcement pressure and appropriate support
- Continue to apply a robust re-connection policy embedded throughout housing, homelessness and associated services

Examples of actions associated with this Focus Area

- Analyse outcomes of multi-agency targeted approach to Rough Sleeping and put systems in place to retain effectiveness
- Develop Housing First Model for entrenched Rough Sleepers
- New processes in place on the use of DHP to reflect new duties of the Homelessness Reduction Act
- Utilise the powers in the Homelessness Reduction Act to re-connect homeless people effectively to their home area under the “duty to relieve”

Focus Area 3 – RECOVER

Help more people avoid repeat homelessness, getting them back on their feet by providing long term solutions

Homelessness should be transitional, not a way of life, but for too many people homelessness becomes almost an institution in itself, whereby people move in and out of supported accommodation provision or receive short interventions and keep falling through the gaps and back into services.

There is a general tendency in Blackpool for tenancies to break down because of the prevalence of poor quality of accommodation in the private rented sector, and some tenants’ unacceptable behaviour.

Homelessness services can provide vital support to enable people to meet their basic human need of shelter at times of crisis, but people need to be better equipped to deal with deep-rooted issues and the problems life throws at them.

Objectives under the focus area:

- Establish new tenancy support that is assertive and encourages responsibility and independence
- Ensure that supported housing services commissioned through the new funding framework, or taking Council referrals, focus on sustained change and pathways to work.
- Ensure that financial barriers to work are minimised in supported housing schemes
- Continue to embed Tenancy Training programmes that are tailored to a range of audiences.
- Apply the Headstart Resilience Framework when working with families, and explore applying the principles with chaotic single people
- Help ensure that staff across the homelessness system in Blackpool are trained in consistent therapeutic approaches that can address underlying trauma
- Develop a more joined up offer of support with partners in substance misuse, mental health, social services, probation, and multiple and complex needs services
- Challenge poor quality accommodation in the private rented sector, working closely with the Housing Enforcement team and helping tenants to understand and exercise their rights.

Examples of actions associated with this Focus Area :

- Develop in-house tenancy support service to work with more complex needs clients with step down arrangements to More Positive Together
- Develop and deliver young person centred Tenancy Training programme in co-ordination with Blackpool Young People’s Service
- Work with frontline services and providers within the homelessness/housing sector to develop a PIE model throughout the town

Governance:

The delivery and development of services under this strategy will be monitored through Blackpool Council.

An action plan will be developed following agreement of the strategy and will be owned by the Council and partners in the Blackpool and Fylde Coast Homelessness Partnerships. The Homelessness Partnerships are made up of statutory and 3rd sector partners and will monitor activity and progress against the action plan and review and develop the plan to reflect changing circumstances over the lifetime of this strategy. The action plan is intended to be a plan for all agencies in the town that are committed to tackling homelessness and not just a work plan for the Council’s Housing Options service.

Performance Indicators:

From April 2018, as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act implementation, central government will radically reform the way they collect performance data from Local Authorities.

The new data collection will receive household level rather than aggregated local authority level data. It will cover a broader range of households, including all those who receive homelessness assistance from their local authority rather than, as now, focusing primarily on those households that authorities are currently legally obliged to help under the statutory homeless definition.

In addition to adhering to the national data collection requirements, Blackpool Council has set a number of local performance indicators to directly assess the impact and delivery of objectives within the new Homelessness Prevention Strategy:

	Indicator	Baseline 2016/17	Target
Focus Area 1 – Prevent	Of all successful prevention cases, what proportion remain in their own home vs. those who are supported to find alternative accommodation	N/A	Target to be developed – an increasing percentage to remain in their own home
	Of cases owed a prevention duty under the new legislation (homeless within 56 days), what proportion are successfully resolved under the prevention duty vs. those who go on to trigger the relief duty	N/A	Target to be developed – an increasing percentage to be addressed under the prevention duty

	Of households who become homeless and present to the Housing Options service, what proportion present again within a 12 month period	11%	9%
	Of those who are homeless and aged 16-17, how many statutory homelessness applications are taken within each year.	25	0
Focus Area 2 – Resolve	Of households placed in temporary accommodation, what is the average length of time spent in temporary accommodation	56.5 days	45 days
	Of those who trigger the relief duty, what proportion are successfully accommodated within 56 days and do not go on to make a formal homelessness application.	N/A	Target to be developed - an increasing percentage to be accommodated within 56 days
Focus Area 3 - Recover	Of identified rough sleepers, what proportion have more than one period of rough sleeping within a 6 month period	21 %	17 %
	Of households who receive directive Tenancy Support, what proportion successfully maintain their tenancy throughout a 12 month period	67 %	80%

Baseline figures are included based on 2016 – 2017 data were available, but not where indicators relate to the new duties of the Homelessness Reduction Act.