Housing Strategy 2018-2023

Making Blackpool Better

1.0 Executive Summary

Blackpool is a town with a big profile. After substantial recent investment in the key visitor attractions and sea front, Blackpool is starting to see growing visitor numbers. Further investment is on its way, including a new conference centre extension to the Winter Gardens, tram link from Blackpool North railway station, and new high quality hotels. Investment in town centre offices and retail, and in the new airport Enterprise Zone is starting to help turn around poor productivity, low wages, and high levels of worklessness.

But there are too many poor quality private rented sector properties housing people with chaotic lifestyles. The market is fuelled by former hotel accommodation reaching the end of its life where the next logical business step is to convert with or without permission to privately rented small flats and bedsits. Owner occupiers are currently reluctant to invest in these areas and property prices are determined by rental yields. Over 80% of tenants receive Housing Benefit, and rents are set at Local Housing Allowance levels which achieves the maximum return if landlords deliver the minimum quality in as many small units as possible.

While the latest local planning policies require higher quality conversions, the town has a legacy of 3,000 poor quality Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) producing high rental yields for landlords, fuelled by Housing Benefit payments and a constant demand from people running away to Blackpool from other parts of the country. Surrounding areas of small terraced houses have also become part of this transient market. As over 50% of homes in inner Blackpool are privately rented, this creates entrenched deprivation and is the antithesis of stable communities.

We are planning to transform the inner area of Blackpool through refurbishment and new build, and working with residents, enabling a transition to high quality residential neighbourhoods by the sea alongside a rejuvenated visitor economy. Delivering our ambitions will not only make the town fit for the next 100 years but will remove the current drag on the local economy of transience and the re-cycling of poverty, and at the same time reduce the cost to the public purse by creating stable and self-sustaining communities.

We have already:

- Got control of new conversions to HMOs through effective use of the Planning system to allow a managed transition to a wider range of high quality units.

- Used to the maximum existing enforcement tools, such as selective and additional licensing, with comprehensive multi-agency inspection programmes. As much as we continue to apply pressure with these tools we know that we are enforcing to statutory standards that are low and at best we are containing the situation.

- Proactively managed and invested Housing Revenue Account resources in Council homes through Blackpool Coastal Housing, including investing in excess of £60m through the decent homes programme. We have been able to demolish our tower blocks and replace them with high quality family accommodation for affordable rent. This required significant subsidy but has produced a product that is aspirational and a tenant profile that is stable and as a consequence requires less public intervention than before.

- Formed a new wholly owned company to acquire a market changing stake in the private rented sector and deliver better quality and more stable private rented properties. Two years in to the acquisition and investment phase "My Blackpool Home" have acquired and refurbished 200 properties and despite tough financial conditions are starting to have a positive impact in the inner core of Blackpool.

- Encouraged ambitious private sector development for market sale with the assembly and preparation of an inner area site for Hollinwood Homes to develop 400 new homes at Foxhall Village. To date 150 homes have been successfully delivered and are now being occupied. This site would not have happened without significant multi agency cooperation and funding around site assembly and remediation and significant subsidy from the Council. While difficult to deliver the development shows what can be achieved and how far Blackpool can stretch resources and manage risk to achieve the necessary strategic change.

- Invested in high quality services to keep people in stable home situations by preventing and responding to homelessness, and establishing new support for young people and families – Better Start and Head Start – and people with Multiple and Complex Needs.

We know we need more of the same sorts of interventions but on a larger scale and more quickly.

There is continuing deprivation and poor health across the town, with investment in tackling poor housing conditions and energy efficiency important to improve living environments and affordability.

While the total population of the town is forecast to remain static, increasing household numbers will result from an ageing population. We need to plan to meet these changing needs and ensure that older people get the housing and support that they need.

We also need to plan to meet the needs of people with disabilities through the development of bespoke new housing.

Although house prices remain low compared with other parts of the country, very low incomes and the difficulty of getting a mortgage mean that many people struggle to get access to a quality home that they can afford. As well as improving the quality of housing in the private rented sector, we need to provide more social rented housing and actively assist people into home ownership. New homes will be delivered across a range of tenures, with new social rented homes focused on family houses that are in the shortest supply.

Our Priorities

1. New Housing Supply

We will deliver more new homes by:

- identifying and releasing local authority owned land to market
- working with developers to deliver more high quality housing for sale
- working with housing associations and developers to deliver more affordable housing in Blackpool
- maximising the delivery of new Council housing for rent
- investigating the potential to deliver new build housing for market rent
- adopting a new Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- working with Homes England on delivering new programmes
- maximising new units developed from existing buildings through My Blackpool Home

We will also:

- Work with other Lancashire local authorities and the LEP to establish joint approaches to increase new housing investment linked to economic plans
- Undertake further work to update and expand understanding of affordability and housing needs in Blackpool, updating the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014
- Develop Part 2 of the Local Plan to confirm site allocations and development management policies
- Complete Queens Park re-development by November 2018, and take forward plans for re-development of land at Grange Park
- Continue to support delivery of the 400 new homes at Foxhall Village, establish plans for the development of a further phase, and work to bring forward other new build development sites in support of regeneration in inner Blackpool
- Establish needs and funding models to bring forward specialist units of accommodation, such as for the growing older population and for people with learning disabilities
- Focus on identifying available land and bringing sites forward to market, offering proactive assistance for developers, and using voluntary acquisition and Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers to assemble development sites
- Review the New Homes from Old Places SPD to manage the transition from guest houses to quality homes in the inner area.

Delivering new supply in inner Blackpool is difficult, with a lack of available sites and low income levels that do not support a vigorous home ownership market at scale. We need commitment to provide funds to assemble and clear key sites alongside those in public ownership to build market changing developments; our experience should give confidence that with the right support we can deliver and create attractive new residential neighbourhoods by the sea.

2. Improving the Private Rented Sector

Establishing a much better housing offer in the private rented sector is essential to transforming inner Blackpool and providing the quality homes that local people need. We will:

- Deliver investment in high quality conversions within inner Blackpool through the work of My Blackpool Home to buy up failing HMO's/guest houses and undertake refurbishment work with the aim of improving quality and reducing density. We will also promote better standards in the private rented sector through lettings and management of other landlords' stock.
- Take forward new approaches to licensing, and investigate a wider offer for landlords.
- Review and extend opportunities for pre-tenancy training to raise skills, and bespoke training for landlords, to give confidence to landlords when they look for new tenants.
- Lobby for benefits changes to reduce the number of poor quality flats through the introduction of a Blackpool specific Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate, linked to standards, offering lower payments for small/low quality flats and higher payments for larger/better quality homes.
- Help residents to buy their own homes where they are working but on low incomes, giving them more control and reducing their housing costs compared with renting.

We need support from Government to address the negative impact of the design of the LHA system. This currently finances inappropriate housing and perpetuates landlords' high density and low investment model by applying market rates from a wide sub-region to inner Blackpool and paying the same for good and bad homes in a town that is dominated by the housing benefit funded "market". We need a new model that creates incentives to produce better quality accommodation and does not pay too much for slum housing in desperately poor areas.

3. Stabilising Lives

The provision of support to prevent and resolve homelessness, and enable recovery, is central to enabling people to get back on their feet and making our communities more resilient. We also need to plan to meet the needs of residents who are the most vulnerable. We will:

- Continue to develop our Housing Options service to prevent and respond to homelessness and help people find appropriate accommodation and support, deliver the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer programme and prepare to work with new statutory duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Provide a clearer framework of strategy and guidance for partners and voluntary organisations to co-ordinate support for vulnerable people, through our new Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018

- Work with partners to review how social housing is allocated and introduce upgraded lettings systems
- Establish better coordinated housing and support with Children's Services for those aged 16-24 through a positive pathway
- Develop and implement new approaches to supporting older people in their own homes and the provision of specialist care, accommodation and support through our new Housing Plan for the Ageing Population
- Continue to offer adaptations to home owners through Disabled Facilities Grants and maximise access to ECO and other sources of energy efficiency funding.
- Invest in holistic support for our people, and especially routes into employment
- Invest in asset based community development work and the development of plans in inner Blackpool

4. Increasing Delivery Capacity

We need to organise our housing companies and internal capacity to deliver this ambitious agenda, but also maximise the contribution and investment from partners. We will:

- Ensure delivery of this strategy and the associated Plans:
- Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018
- Housing Plan for an Ageing Population 2017
- New regeneration framework for inner Blackpool
- Review how Blackpool Coastal Housing and My Blackpool Home operate and work together with the Council, ensuring effective coordination and enabling us to take advantage of new opportunities
- Ensure that we provide clarity and opportunities for partners and investors on the roles that they can play in delivering better housing in Blackpool.
- Join up service delivery to provide the best possible services to help residents meet their housing needs and aspirations.
- Further develop links between housing work and the provision of health and social care.

Successful delivery of our housing ambitions will achieve:

- The ability to support sustainable economic growth by providing better quality and more stable accommodation of all tenures

- The removal of poor quality but costly private rented stock with better quality affordable options with a variety of tenures, so that there is a range of affordable aspirational housing that people want to move into

- An ongoing reduction in cost to the public purse by creating stable and self-sustaining communities

2.0 Introduction

Blackpool is a town with a big profile. In geographic terms it is by far the smallest Lancashire authority covering just 35 square kilometres, but it is much loved by millions of holiday makers from across the UK.

After substantial recent investment in the key visitor attractions and sea front, Blackpool is starting to see growing visitor numbers. Further investment is on its way, including a new conference centre extension to the Winter Gardens, tram link from Blackpool North railway station, and new high quality hotels.

Blackpool is also the economic centre of the wider Fylde Coast area. New town centre offices and retail developments are underway, and a new Enterprise Zone at the airport is starting to deliver new employment opportunities. Plans are in place that will help turn around poor productivity, low wages, and high levels of worklessness.

But we are still dealing with the legacy of poor quality homes, especially in inner Blackpool where many former guest houses have been converted to small flats. People run away to Blackpool when life gets hard and find themselves struggling in this sub-standard housing, perpetuating poverty.

A core ambition is to deliver a more successful transition from traditional holiday accommodation to new residential neighbourhoods with a mix of house types by the seaside, close to new employment and leisure opportunities.

We will create the conditions where if individuals can stabilise their lives and aspire to a more stable employed future they can find attractive homes and want to stay in the inner town, reducing the churn and inflow.

We will support sustainable economic growth by providing better quality and more stable accommodation of all tenures, with a range of affordable aspirational housing that people want to move into. There is a great opportunity to help meet the housing needs of the wider sub-region.

This strategy also focuses on the changing needs of Blackpool residents. Great quality housing and strong support services are vital to improving the physical health and mental wellbeing of our communities, especially as the population gets older. Decent housing promotes independence, opportunity, educational attainment, access to work and a better quality of life for local people.

Much has already been achieved but there is a still a long way to go before we realise our ambitions. We need to increase the pace of delivery, working with public and private partners.

This Housing Strategy presents an ambitious and distinct approach to tackling the housing issues within our town. It sets out our vision and our priorities to help deliver Blackpool Council's plan to make Blackpool the UK's number one family resort,

with a thriving economy that supports a happy and healthy community who are proud of this unique town.

3.0 Recent Successes

We have been pro-active in delivering the transformation of the housing offer in Blackpool over the last few years.

New Housing and Supply

The 'New Homes from Old Places' planning policy was introduced to manage the quality of new homes created from former guest houses, alongside the Holiday Accommodation Areas SPD that widened the areas of potential conversions. The policies have been successful in significantly improving the quality of conversions coming forward whilst maintaining the new supply from conversions at the rate of approximate 80-100 homes per year.

Foxhall Village new build development adjacent to South Beach started on site in 2014 following site assembly and remediation by the Council. Due for completion by 2022 Foxhall Village pioneers a new home ownership market in the inner town, and will provide 410 distinctive and high quality new homes.

Queens Park estate re-development commenced in 2012 and will be completed later in 2018. The scheme demolished 500 flats, including 5 high rise blocks and replaces them with a total of 103 new houses and 88 flats for Council tenants.

Improving our Private Rented Sector

My Blackpool Home, a new Council-owned housing company was established in 2015. It acquires properties that need improvement, converts and refurbishes them to a high standard, and lets them at market rents to local tenants. My Blackpool Home also offers a social lettings agency service which places residents with a housing need in approved private rented accommodation. The service currently accommodates around 90 households in each three month period, nearly half as many as all social housing lettings.

Selective Licensing schemes have been introduced to two parts of inner Blackpool - in South Beach in 2012 and Claremont in 2014. Additional licensing in the Central area went live on 4th July 2016. The schemes aim to improve management standards, reduce ASB and consequently the adverse impact of privately rented accommodation on the inner area neighbourhoods.

The Clusters of Empty Homes Fund helped refurbish and bring back into use 100 empty homes, using £1.6 million of grant assistance.

Stabilising Lives

Decent Homes investment by Blackpool Coastal Housing in our Council owned homes has delivered major investment over the last few years, including an additional **£60 million** invested in the Council's 5,000 homes to meet the Decent Homes Standard by March 2015.

Blackpool Coastal Housing

Energy efficiency has improved as we have taken a pro-active approach to Energy Company Obligations (ECO) to improve domestic energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty. As a result, 700 private homes in the Revoe area of inner Blackpool have benefitted from external solid wall insulation. Most recently, the Central Heating Fund has improved EPC ratings so that 96% of homes receiving investment achieved an EPC rating of level A-D.

We have **reduced domestic carbon emissions by 35%** over the last 10 years, the biggest reduction across the UK; this represents a quarter of a million fewer tonnes of carbon being emitted into the atmosphere from the town.

Homelessness was prevented or relieved for over 1,300 households in 2016/17. While social issues lead to high numbers of people seeking help, rough sleeping has been contained in Blackpool compared with other areas.

The Transience Programme, aligned with licensing schemes, has supported 2,000 vulnerable residents. This has included vital community development work, building social networks to improve confidence and increase community cohesion.

4.0 The Blackpool Story

Blackpool is a British institution, and a global phenomenon – the world's first mass market seaside resort, with a proud heritage stretching back over 150 years. However, while the town continues to attract millions of visitors, Blackpool has one of the country's greatest concentrations of socio-economic deprivation as a consequence of decades of decline in traditional tourism sectors.

Blackpool is characterised by an oversupply of poor quality one-person accommodation, limited choice of family housing particularly in the inner area, and a shortage of good quality affordable housing across the Borough. The concentration of small, poor quality housing in the inner areas enables vulnerable households who are running away from problems in other parts of the country to stay. At the same time, poor quality and unstable tenancies lead to a churn of people within inner neighbourhoods, leading to high levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and unstable, fragmented communities with high levels of transience. The inner areas of Blackpool present one of the most testing social and economic challenges in the country.

Changing the structure of the housing offer in Blackpool is our most important objective, and especially the legacy of poorly converted guest houses in inner Blackpool. This is fundamental to improving the economic fortunes, and health and wellbeing of the communities that live here. There is an ongoing dynamic of a reduction in guest house accommodation and being able to manage this transition from poor quality guest houses to an attractive residential offer in the inner areas is our biggest challenge.

It is important to adopt an **area based approach to regeneration**, responding to the different priorities, needs and aspirations of each community.

Figure 1: Foxhall Village Development

Alongside changing the structure of the inner areas, **promoting decent conditions** in an is especially important, and our Housing Enforcement team lead on this, working with good landlords to offer training and advice, whilst enforcing against those landlords who fail to offer a decent standard of accommodation.

The Housing Options team has an essential role to play in **helping residents** to find and maintain the right accommodation for them, reducing the transience that is so harmful to local communities.

While In Blackpool over two thirds of households who receive housing benefit live in the private rented sector, the social rented sector has a key role to play in providing a range of high quality homes.

Figure 2: Queens Park demolition

As the owner of 5,000 Council homes (8% of all homes in the borough), Blackpool Council and our Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Blackpool Coastal Housing will work hard to use the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to deliver ongoing investment in homes and surrounding neighbourhoods, and deliver more **new Council homes**. Some of our Council estates are very deprived, so we will work with residents to improve economic opportunities.

It is also important to deliver the better quality new market homes that our communities need. Adopted in 2016, Part 1 of **Blackpool Council's Local Plan** sets out a requirement for 280 new homes per year, 100 of which are anticipated to be conversions from existing buildings, with the remainder new build properties across the borough.

By bringing together these different elements we can deliver real change within our communities.

Figure 3: New build development at Queens Park

4.1 Key Facts and Figures

As of February 2017 the **average house price** in the UK was £217,502, an increase of £40,241 from the average price of £177,261 in February 2007, shortly before the 2007 peak. However the Blackpool average in February 2017 was £102,401, which represents a decrease of £21,479 over the same period from the 2007 average of £123,880.[1]

But house prices in Blackpool are now stable and have started to rise slowly – up slightly over the last five years from £97,305 in July 2012 to £103,985 in July 2017.

[1] *HM Land Registry*

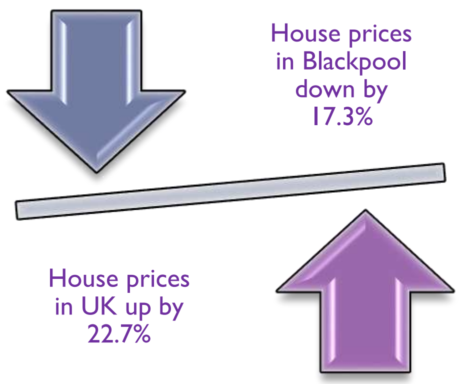

Figure 4: House Prices 2007-17

House prices are significantly lower in Blackpool than in the surrounding areas of Wyre and Fylde. This partly reflects the large number of smaller properties in Blackpool but also the lack of attractiveness of some areas. In Fylde, homes are larger on average, but there is a premium of at least £40,000 over comparable properties in Blackpool. In Wyre, 70% of the housing stock is detached or semi-detached. Properties in Wyre tend to be at least £20,000 more expensive than a comparable property in Blackpool.[2]

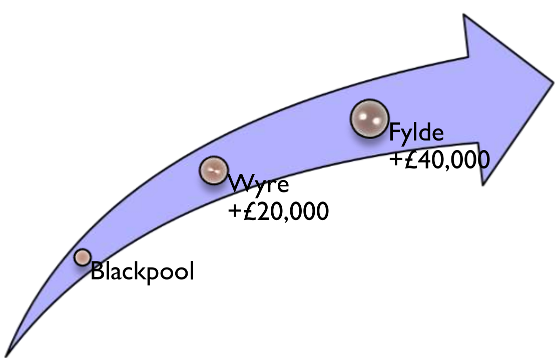

Figure 5: House price comparisons across the Fylde Coast

Although house prices are relatively low in Blackpool and it is currently cheaper to buy than rent, many residents still do not have the stable employment and income levels necessary to buy their own home.

House prices are so low in some parts of the borough that new development is not viable; this presents challenges for delivering a better quality housing offer.

Despite low house prices, renting in Blackpool is more expensive and less affordable to local residents than in some other towns in Lancashire. The median monthly **private sector rent** in Blackpool in 2016 was 30% of the median gross monthly salary, compared with around 21% in Blackburn, Burnley and Lancaster and 23% in Preston. This reflects very low salaries in Blackpool, but also shows how rents are propped up by Housing Benefit levels.

There are around 4,500 **empty properties** in the Fylde Coast, of which over half are located in Blackpool. In inner Blackpool, empty homes can be part of a natural transition and we would expect to see higher levels of empty homes in this area. This is indicative of poor stock, and of enforcement work being undertaken to shut down these properties prior to redevelopment.

There is a **lack of developable land** because Blackpool is intensely urban and compact in form, largely built up to its boundaries. Approximately 80% of the urban area is developed; undeveloped land largely consists of protected open space providing important recreational and amenity benefits for residents and visitors, or small sites

[2] *Fylde Coast Strategic Market Assessment, 2014*

more suited to small-scale (often windfall) development. Larger sites associated with the Blackpool urban area are located in the neighbouring boroughs of Fylde and Wyre.

Establishing a better housing offer through the development of new homes is especially important to economic prosperity in Blackpool because of the imbalance and poor quality in the existing housing stock.

Blackpool has a very **large private rented sector** compared with other towns (26% of all homes), a relatively small social rented sector (11% of homes), and a declining owner occupied sector (62%). Between 2001 and 2011 around 5,000 homes changed from owner occupation to private rent. There is an especially large concentration of private renting in inner Blackpool – 50% of all homes there.

Transience has been an identified issue in Blackpool for a long time. Population turnover statistics identify that inner Blackpool has extremely high numbers of people moving into and out of the town, and also movement within the town.

Analysis of new Housing Benefit claims shows that 85.5% of entirely new claims from April 2013 to March 2014 came from people whose last address was outside of the borough. 63% of these moved into a home in the inner area of the town.

The total number of households in receipt of Housing Benefit in the private rented sector in Blackpool almost doubled between 2003 and 2013, to 14,980, although has since stabilized.

Analysis of the private rented sector in inner Blackpool based on the Council's Enforcement database in 2015 showed that nearly 65% of households were single person households.

The proportion of Housing Benefit claimants in Blackpool living in the private rented sector is the highest in the country at 73%, and around 80% of all private tenants receive Housing Benefit. A significant concentration of this stock is in the most deprived inner areas of Blackpool.

In Blackpool only 22% of housing benefit claimants in the private rented sector are in employment, compared to the national average of 36%. Within Blackpool the proportion of claimants in employment for those receiving the Shared Room Rate and 1 bedroom rate of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is only around 10%.

The **social housing stock** is concentrated in large Council housing estates which are also deprived. Lettings policies have focused on providing social housing for those in the greatest need, however as a consequence pushing out those low paid, economically active potential renters. Over recent years welfare reform has changed the way social housing providers work, forcing them to challenge their existing services and make tough financial decisions in order to maintain their operational delivery.

5.0 Housing and Our Health

The health of people in Blackpool is generally worse than the England average. Blackpool is one of the most deprived districts in England and around **30% of children live in low income families**.

Although across Blackpool as a whole, life expectancy has risen for both males and females over a 20 year period, it has not risen as quickly as across the country as a whole. Since approximately 2011 improvement in life expectancy across England has started to flatten and this is also seen in Blackpool.

Figure 6: Walter Robinson Court before demolition

Deaths at ages well below average national life expectancy are what make Blackpool very different from elsewhere. Worryingly we have seen an increase in these deaths in 2015 and Blackpool's mortality rate for people under 65 is twice that of England.

Blackpool's housing stock is a critical driver of poor health, to a greater extent than other deprived towns:

- Blackpool is attractive to people running away from other areas and the extensive and easily accessible poor quality private rented sector imports vulnerable people in poor health to the town.
- The large concentration of HMOs compounds poor health – for example, 48% of drug related deaths are among the 16.5% of Blackpool's population in the Mosaic L50 Renting a Room social group
- A generally old and poorly maintained housing stock worsens conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases and depression and anxiety.[3] Poor housing conditions nationally are estimated to cost the NHS at least £600 million per year.

The challenges faced by Blackpool's economy are closely related to the health of its population and the association between low income, poverty and poor mental and/or physical health is well

[3] http://www.parliament.uk/documents/post/postpn_371-housing_health_h.pdf

established. High levels of chronic illness in Blackpool contribute to lower levels of employment. 12.9 per cent of Blackpool's working age population claim ESA or Incapacity Benefit; this is more than double the national average of 6.2 per cent.[4] In Blackpool, 52% of ESA claimants have a mental health disorder (compared to 46% nationally), and although statistics are not available for JSA customers, Job Centre Plus surveys suggest a very similar picture.

Studies have also consistently shown that unemployment increases the chances of poor health. The negative health experiences of unemployment also extend to families and the wider community. The average earnings for those in work in Blackpool is lower than any other local authority in England. A smaller proportion of the Blackpool labour market is economically active compared to England, and a high proportion of those inactive are long term sick.

According to recent Public Health Annual Reports, the **causes of shorter life expectancy** in Blackpool and major causes of early deaths are:

- Higher levels of harmful drinking and drug use
- Smoking
- Unhealthy diets and excess weight, and
- Inactive and sedentary lifestyles

But the impact of all of **these harmful behaviours is compounded by poor housing** and environmental conditions.

Interventions that improve housing conditions have been shown to result in improvements in mental health, including reduced anxiety or depression, psychological distress, and improved patient reported health score. Providing a warm home has been clearly shown to benefit both young and old in relation to their feeling of wellbeing as well as reducing the physical and mental health risks that can arise from cold homes.

The evaluation of the UK Warm Front Scheme, found that increasing the warmth of homes had a clear positive impact on mental health – those with bedroom temperatures of 21 degrees C were 50% less likely to experience depression and anxiety than those whose bedrooms were only 15C. Other housing hazards such as condensation, damp and mould, noise, and pests have also been shown to have some connection to mental health.

[4] https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Health-and-social-care/Documents/HWB-Strategy-2016-19-final.pdf

Key vulnerable groups in Blackpool include:

5.1 Rough Sleepers and the homeless

Approximately **2,500** households approach the Council's Housing Options service each year. Over 1,000 households receive formal homelessness assessments, with around 650 found to be homeless each year. This level has risen slightly over the past two years, but the underlying high level of homelessness reflects the myriad of **chaotic lifestyles, vulnerability, social issues and high transience levels** particularly in the private rented sector in the inner areas.

The top reasons for homelessness in Blackpool reflect the sofa surfing in the town, with a higher proportion of exclusions by family and friends than the national average.

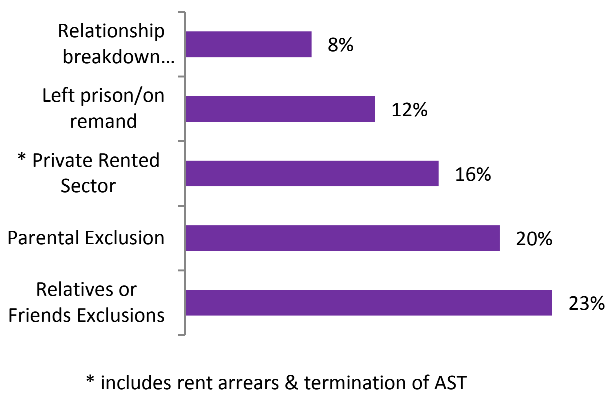

Figure 7: Top five reasons for homelessness in Blackpool

Those suffering from homelessness are more likely to have long term health and mental health problems and are also more likely to misuse drugs and alcohol.

The number of rough sleepers in Blackpool was found to be 13 in November 2017, a rise from 11 in November 2016. Rough sleepers often have multiple and complex needs and are at very high risk of serious health issues including: cold, hunger and fear; lack of basic facilities for personal care and drug and alcohol addictions.

5.2 Young children affected by transience

Families generally become transient when they are fleeing a difficult situation or lose their rented accommodation. Transience can **reduce community cohesion and increase social isolation**, as well as contributing to poor social and economic outcomes for individuals and families.

Frequent residential and school mobility has a negative effect on early educational attainment, with school moves having the biggest impact.[5]

[5] DCLG English Housing Survey 2015

Across Blackpool approximately 15% of children transfer between schools each year with mobility levels at school range from <5% to 37%. In 2014/15 2,668 Blackpool children changed schools.[6]

5.3 Vulnerable Young People

Under the Children Leaving Care Act 2000 all local authorities have a statutory duty to provide suitable accommodation to children in care and to care leavers, and further duties apply to homeless 16 and 17 year olds. The proportion of children in care in Blackpool is currently by far the highest in the country, and outcomes are typically poor compared with those not in care. The Council is committed to reducing the numbers of children in care, preventing family breakdown, providing better alternatives to homeless 16 and 17 year olds, and better homes with support for care leavers.

5.4 People in properties with poor heating and insulation

Out of an estimated 65,501 households in Blackpool, 8,633 of those households are deemed to be fuel poor. This equates to **approximately 13.2% of households living in fuel poverty** as defined by the 'low income/high costs (LIHC) fuel poverty indicator. 6 wards are above 25%, compared with the national average figure of 11.2%. However, since the introduction of the Energy Company Obligation, Blackpool Council has helped residents access **more measures per 1,000 households** than anywhere else in the UK apart from Bradford. Blackpool Council is part of Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) a collaboration of 15 Councils across Lancashire, offering residents access to grants, advice and support on money saving energy measures to help **improve energy efficiency** in their homes.

COSY HOMES IN LANCASHIRE

The total number of measures installed under ECO in Blackpool stands at 16,361, which has helped thousands of residents reduce their energy bills and access more efficient boilers and better insulation for their homes. Reducing the amount of energy needed to keep homes warm, cutting down on carbon emissions as well as reducing monthly energy bills.

5.5 People with long term support needs

An ageing population in Blackpool will increase the number of people whose mobility is impaired by physical disability. When people live in poor quality housing or housing that is not appropriate for their needs, poor mobility and risk of falls increases, and demand increases for adaptations.

Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH) manages most sheltered accommodation in Blackpool, on behalf of the Council, with 800 properties designed for this use. The majority of renters are over 55 years of age. The purpose of these units is to offer residents the **security and support** they need

[6] Blackpool Council, School Mobility Summary 2014/15

whilst allowing them to remain independent. With the exception of Dunsop Court the accommodation mostly compromises of ground floor flats in groups of 30-60 homes, often with an associated community centre. Other social housing providers offer sheltered housing services in Blackpool including Great Places Housing Group.

Figure 8: Sheltered accommodation block in Blackpool

Whilst there is still a demand for sheltered housing in Blackpool the number of residents expressing an interest when properties become vacant has reduced over time with some schemes in less popular locations being more difficult to let. Some sites are currently being reviewed and remodelled to ensure they meet future needs.

There are currently over 620 individuals with learning disabilities who are in receipt of some level of Council intervention or support to manage their long term needs. The majority of these people will require future support in maintaining suitable accommodation or moving as their needs change. There is a need to develop an accommodation strategy as well as deliver planned new homes that maximise independence.

6.0 Our Future Housing Need

In Blackpool there is a complex link between **employment change and housing provision** and the authority's existing labour force profile, which is defined by comparatively high levels of worklessness and economic inactivity. The alignment of **future housing growth to economic prosperity** is particularly **critical** for Blackpool.

Priority One of the Council Plan stresses the need to be alive to **new economic opportunities**, and in order to encourage people of working age to live in Blackpool we need quality homes close to jobs in the centre of town. Currently in the inner areas of the town, there is a lack of choice, with too many small flats for rent and a lack of larger properties suitable for family occupation. This requires development at scale to create new neighbourhoods that give confidence to home buyers and working tenants.

Outside of the inner areas the housing stock is generally of a better standard, comprising predominantly semi-detached and terraced housing, providing more choice for higher income households, but there is still a lack of the very best new homes.

We need homes that are affordable to people at all income levels. Currently incomes in Blackpool are among the lowest in the country as a result of low pay and insecure work and because of high levels of economic inactivity. People on the lowest incomes are typically able to access homes relatively easily compared to other parts of the country with the help of Housing Benefit. But there is very limited social housing stock and most people on low incomes are housed in the private rented sector, with lower security of tenure and often very poor quality.

While the most affordable tenure is social renting, the second most affordable tenure currently is **owner occupation**, because of low house prices and low interest rates.

Despite this, there continues to be a decline in home ownership and rise in private renting, fuelled by the difficulty in accessing home ownership and the ease of accessing private renting with Housing Benefit support. There is an opportunity to help get working people on low wages into home ownership through new flexible shared ownership / shared equity products, and at the same time help stabilise communities in inner Blackpool.

There is also a need for new market housing for sale that includes larger homes that meet aspirations for all types of households who can afford it. This housing is currently in relatively short supply within the Blackpool boundaries.

There will continue to be **significant demand for social rented** housing from private rented tenants looking for better quality accommodation and more security of tenure. The Fylde Coast Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) illustrates a particular demand for larger affordable properties to meet the needs of families with children.

The Housing Register currently shows that most applicants need 1 and 2 bedroomed properties, with 84% of current applicants being assessed as requiring this size of property (Fig 9), but because the current supply of social rented housing is dominated by smaller units, the average waiting times are highest for larger homes (Fig 10).

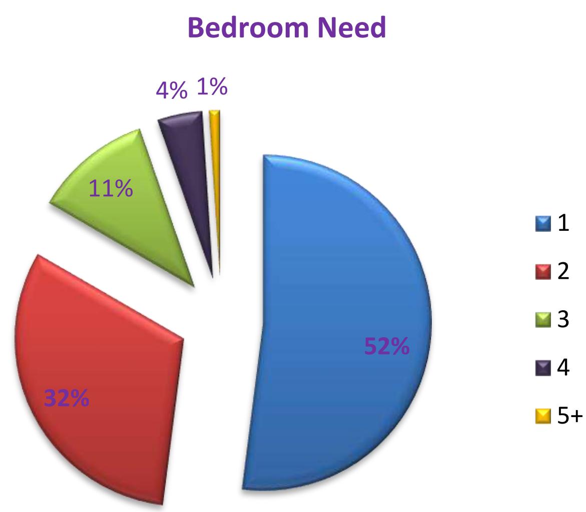

Figure 9: Housing Waiting List Bedroom Need

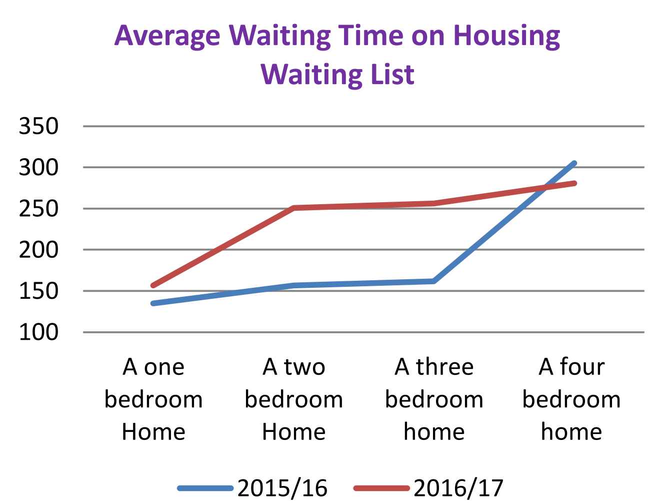

Figure 10: Median waiting times 2015/16 and 2016/17

There has been a marked increase in average time waited from 2015/16 to 2016/17. The increase in waiting times reflects strong demand and fewer and fewer lettings as turnover in social housing reduces.

The town requires more social housing for rent to be provided, with an emphasis on two, three, and four bedroom houses, along with homes for the growing number of older people.

Figure 11: New family homes at Queens Park redevelopment

The **private rented sector** will continue to play an important role in meeting housing needs for people on low incomes, but it is critical that the range and quality of homes is improved. There should be less emphasis on housing people on Housing Benefit. The stock must become more diverse and more attractive to tenants with good incomes.

There is a strong demand for better quality homes for rent from local workers, and it is important to meet the needs of this market to underpin economic improvement.

Growth in the **older person population** accounts for a significant proportion of the projected increase in couple and one person households.

Blackpool's population pyramid (Fig 12) displays a higher proportion of people over 45 years of age, and a much lower proportion in ages younger than 45 than the England average.

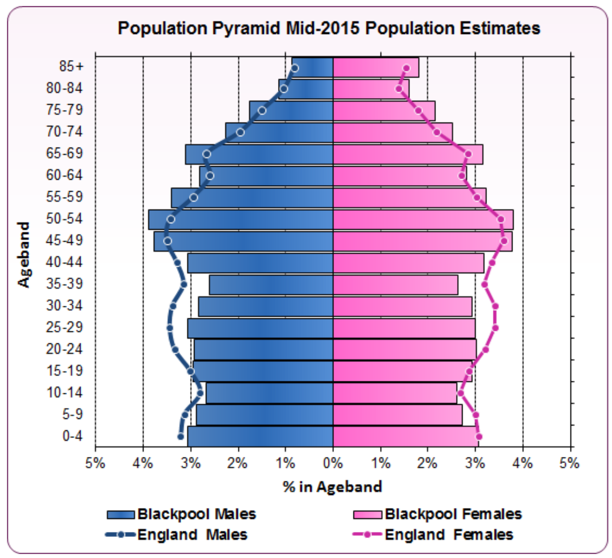

Figure 12: Population Pyramid (Mid 2015 Estimated Resident Population) - Blackpool

Projections of the population of Blackpool indicate that the number of residents over 65 will show a considerable increase within the next 25 years, far in excess of the levels of increase shown in all other age bands. The over 65 population is projected to rise by 28% from 28,500 in 2014 to 36,500 in 2039 and will then make up over a quarter (26%) of Blackpool’s total population.

Whilst the older person (aged 65+) population is forecast to grow within Blackpool by 19% over this period, it is mitigated by net out-migration of those aged 55+ from the authority to neighbouring Fylde and Wyre and the different social profile of Blackpool. The highest rate of growth is in the 85+ age group, which will necessitate the provision of specialised accommodation with support as well as homes with level access and adaptations to meet specific housing requirements.

Older people in Blackpool typically opt to own their own home, although there will be increasing numbers of older private renters in future. Given that a substantial proportion of older person households currently under-occupy their homes and there is a lack of provision of homes designed for older people's needs, it is important to provide more appropriate and accessible new homes in the general market.

Blackpool Council's Housing Plan for the Ageing Population 2017 provides further detail on the needs of older people in Blackpool Objective 6 of the Plan details provision of a strategic framework for commissioning new specialist housing to meet the growing needs and aspirations of older people[7]

The 2016 **Gypsy and Traveller** Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) Update Report identified a need for 5 additional pitches for gypsies and travellers over the period 2016 - 2031. It also identifies a need for 5 travelling show people plots over the same period. In terms of additional need for non-travelling gypsies and travellers the Update Report indicates a need for 35 pitches over the period 2016 - 2031.

[7] Blackpool Council Housing Plan for the Ageing Population 2017

7.0 Our Priorities

Our **four priorities** are:

New Housing and Supply	Stabilising Lives
Improving our Private Rented Sector	Increasing Delivery Capacity

These priorities reflect the key challenge in Blackpool to create a new and better housing offer in the inner town, while meeting local housing needs and supporting vulnerable residents.

New Housing and Supply

Local authorities are uniquely placed to address housing supply, acting as both a direct provider and as an enabler of private and social housing developments. We have to take advantage of every possible opportunity to improve the quality of homes in Blackpool through new supply.

We will take advantage of capital grant funding opportunities to deliver affordable housing, and further opportunities to borrow at low cost to deliver homes through conversions and high quality new housing for market rent and sale.

But to reduce the density of established HMOs and bring forward new quality housing stock in the inner area requires public subsidy because of high existing use values driven by Housing Benefit funded rental yields, and low market values for new development. We need commitment from Government to provide funds to assemble and clear key sites alongside those in public ownership to build market changing developments; our experience should give confidence that with the right support we can deliver and create attractive new residential neighbourhoods by the sea.

We will:

- Increase the supply of housing to at least 280 homes p.a by:
  - identifying and releasing local authority owned land to market
  - working with developers to deliver more high quality housing for sale
  - working with housing associations and developers to deliver more affordable housing in Blackpool
  - maximising the delivery of new Council housing for rent
  - investigating the potential to deliver new build housing for market rent
  - adopting a new Affordable Housing SPD
  - working with Homes England on delivering new programmes
  - maximising new units developed from existing buildings through My Blackpool Home

- Undertake further work to update and expand understanding of affordability and housing needs in Blackpool, updating the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014
- Work with other Lancashire local authorities and the LEP to establish joint approaches to increase new housing investment linked to economic plans
- Develop Part 2 of the Local Plan to confirm site allocations and development management policies
- Complete Queens Park re-development by November 2018, and take forward plans for re-development of land at Grange Park
- Continue to support delivery of the 400 new homes at Foxhall Village, establish plans for the development of a further phase, and work to bring forward other new build development sites in support of regeneration in inner Blackpool
- Establish needs and funding models to bring forward accommodation for the growing older population and for people with learning disabilities
- Focus on identifying available land and bringing sites forward to market, offering proactive assistance for developers, and using voluntary acquisition and Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers to assemble development sites
- Review the New Homes from Old Places SPD to manage the transition from guest houses to quality homes in the inner area.

Improving our Private Rented Sector

Establishing a much better housing offer in the private rented sector is essential to transforming inner Blackpool and providing the better quality homes that local people need. We need support from Government to address the negative impact of the design of the Local Housing Allowance system. This currently finances inappropriate housing and perpetuates landlords' high density and low investment model by applying market rates from a wide sub-region to inner Blackpool and paying the same for good and bad homes in a town that is dominated by the housing benefit funded "market". We need a new model that creates incentives to produce better quality accommodation and does not pay too much for slum housing in desperately poor areas.

We will:

- Deliver investment in high quality conversions within inner Blackpool through the work of My Blackpool Home to buy up failing HMO's/Guest Houses and undertake refurbishment work with the aim of improving quality and reducing density
- Promote better standards in the private rented sector through lettings and management of landlords' stock by My Blackpool Home
- Take forward new approaches to licensing, and investigate a wider offer for landlords through a new Blackpool Standard

- Review and extend opportunities for pre-tenancy training to raise skills, and bespoke training for landlords, to give confidence to landlords when they look for new tenants
- Lobby for benefits changes to reduce the number of poor quality flats through the introduction of a Blackpool specific LHA rate, linked to standards, offering lower payments for small/low quality flats and higher payments for larger/better quality homes.
- Help residents to buy their own homes where they are working but on low incomes, giving them more control and reducing their housing costs compared with renting.

Stabilising Lives

The provision of support to prevent and resolve homelessness, and enable recovery, is central to enabling people to get back on their feet and making our communities more resilient. We also need to plan to meet the needs of residents who are the most vulnerable. Pressures on revenue budgets mean that housing-related support funding has been withdrawn, and many services are under pressure. But there are also new funding opportunities – for example, the Council has been successful in bidding for specific funding programmes to alleviate homelessness, helping to maintain a strong service to support vulnerable people and address transience.

We will:

- Continue to develop our Housing Options service to prevent and respond to homelessness and help people find appropriate accommodation and support, deliver the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer programme, and work with new statutory duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Provide a clearer framework of strategy and guidance for partners and voluntary organisations to co-ordinate support for vulnerable people, through our new Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018
- Work with partners to review how social housing is allocated and introduce upgraded lettings systems
- Establish better coordinated housing and support with Children's Services for those aged between 16-24 through a positive pathway
- Develop and implement new approaches to supporting older people in their own homes and the provision of specialist care, accommodation, and support through our new Housing Plan for the Ageing Population
- Continue to offer adaptations to home owners through Disabled Facilities Grants and maximise access to ECO and other sources of energy efficiency funding.
- Invest in holistic support for our people, and especially routes into employment
- Invest in asset based community development work and the development of plans in inner Blackpool

Increasing Delivery Capacity

We will organise our housing companies and internal capacity to deliver this ambitious agenda, but also maximise the contribution and investment from partners.

We will:

- Ensure delivery of this strategy and the associated Plans:
  - Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018
  - Housing Plan for an Ageing Population 2017
  - New regeneration plans for inner Blackpool
  - Updated work on affordability and housing needs in Blackpool
- Review how our housing companies operate and work together with the Council, ensuring effective coordination and enabling us to take advantage of new opportunities
- Ensure that we provide clarity and opportunities for partners and investors on the roles that they can play in delivering better housing in Blackpool.
- Join up service delivery to provide the best possible services to help residents meet their housing needs and aspirations.
- Further develop links between housing services and interventions and the provision of health and social care.

8.0 Outcomes

In delivering this strategy, we expect to see positive housing and economic outcomes over the long term:

Year 1-5

Stabilisation

Years 6-10

Persistent and visible change

Years 11-15

Entrenching permanent change

Housing Outcomes

- Levels of homelessness stabilise, with continuing investment in prevention and relief work
- More Council and private tenants in employment through the More Positive Together programme
- Better standards in the private rented sector through the growing ownership and influence of My Blackpool Home and effective work with landlords and
- Further development of new family homes at Foxhall Village
- Stronger communities in inner Blackpool as housing regulation and public service delivery is pro-active and coordinated at neighbourhood level
- Market starts to produce more attractive homes in inner Blackpool and transition to sustainable residential neighbourhoods
- More new housing for sale and rent across the town
- More options for older people through investment in existing homes and development of a wider range of new homes
- Significant improvements in the state of repair and energy efficiency of the existing housing stock
- More general reduction in numbers of poor quality private rented homes in inner Blackpool and transition to sustainable residential neighbourhoods

Economic Outcomes

- Improved skills and reduced long term worklessness assisted by reducing transience through stable and better quality housing and neighbourhood environments
- Improved educational attainment, linked to reductions in concentrations of deprivation and more balanced communities
- Movement to a higher value tourism offer, with higher quality tourist accommodation, supported by the creation of a more stable and higher value residential offer in the immediate vicinity
- Improved transport connections assisted by a focus of new housing development close to employment centres / transport nodes
- New business startups, and existing high value manufacturing retained within the area, assisted by the further development of attractive housing at every level of the market

9.0 Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators for the strategy are split into two sections. Firstly the 'Key *Contextual* Indicators' which are indicators that relate to the vision and aims of the strategy, but which can be influenced by factors outside the control of the strategy. In some cases this is simply because the level of resource available to deliver the strategy is limited, and in others because there are external factors which influence the indicators more widely.

The second section consists of 'Key *Activity* Indicators' are indicators that are based directly on activity identified in the strategy.

9.1 Key Contextual Indicators

Priority	Key Contextual Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency	Desired Improvement Measure
New Housing and Supply	# of new homes completed (net / gross)	Planning Strategy	Annually	↑
	# new conversions completed (net / gross)	Planning Strategy		↑
	# properties empty for more than 2 years	Council Tax		↓
	Average time on housing register by priority bands A, B and C	Housing Options		↓
	Housing affordability (Ratio of median house price to median gross annual residence-based earnings)	Housing Strategy		→
	Median rental value in £	Housing Strategy		→
	# Houses in Multiple Occupation	Housing Enforcement		↓
Stabilising Lives	% of population in fuel poverty	Housing Strategy	Annually	↓
	% of households with A – E EPC Rating	Housing Strategy		↑
	% households classified in Transient MOSAIC types	Housing Strategy		↓
	% private rented sector properties rented to people in receipt of Housing Benefit /UC	Housing Strategy		↓

9.2 Key Activity Indicators

Priority	Key Activity Indicator	Responsibility	Frequency	Improvement Measure
New Housing and Supply	# New conversions completed by My Blackpool Home	My Blackpool Home	Quarterly	↑
	# New homes completed facilitated by the Council			↑
Improve our private rented sector	# new units delivered by My Blackpool Home		Quarterly	↑
	# units let by My Blackpool Home			↑
	# units managed by My Blackpool Home			↑
	# properties subject to improvement/intervention in licensing areas	Housing Enforcement		↑
Stabilising Lives	# energy efficiency measures per 1000 households	Housing Strategy	Annually	↑
	Average length of private sector tenancy in My Blackpool Home properties	My Blackpool Home		↑
	# people repeatedly presenting as homeless within a 12 month period	Housing Options	Quarterly	↓
	# people presenting at risk of homelessness, whose potential homelessness is prevented			↑
	# people for whom homelessness is successfully relieved			↑
	# repeat rough sleepers within a 6 month period			↓
	# Council tenants in employment or support routes into employment	Blackpool Coastal Housing	Annually	↑