

Barrow Borough Council's  
**Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy**  
**2020-2025**



*Our vision is to prevent homelessness and meet the housing support needs of vulnerable households through the provision of high-quality and accessible accommodation, support, information and advice.*

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## Foreword

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Welcome to Barrow Borough Council's new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which sets out the Council's priorities for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years.

The prevention of homelessness continues to be a key priority for Barrow Borough Council and its partners. We recognise the negative impacts homelessness has upon the health and wellbeing of affected households who are often trapped in cycles of deprivation. Homelessness is a complex issue with multiple causes requiring flexible solutions.

This strategy sets out how the Council, alongside its partners, intends to meet the challenge of preventing homelessness over the next five years, ensuring support is available to help people avoid being without a home and sustain their existing living accommodation. The strategy builds on the strengths of the previous strategy and contributes towards the strategic objectives within Barrow Borough Council's Corporate Plan; in particular, to work effectively with partners to address current and future housing needs and achieve our vision '*for our Borough to be a great place to live, work and visit*'.

Preventing homelessness has always been a key priority by using a variety of prevention tools; we will continually strive to identify new prevention initiatives which will help to address homelessness in our Borough. We recognise homelessness is a cross cutting issue which cannot be tackled by one agency in isolation. Barrow Borough Council has a proven history of working in partnership to tackle homelessness. This includes working with statutory and voluntary agencies, housing related support providers, Citizens Advice for all matters relating to budgeting and benefits and Women's Community Matters for specialist domestic abuse support.

Barrow Borough Council has worked in partnership with key local stakeholders throughout the development of the shared priorities and key actions included within this strategy. Our focus is on preventing people from becoming homeless, supporting those who are homeless to build a more positive future in good health, sustainable accommodation and offering pathways into employment and financial inclusion. To achieve this we will continue to collaboratively work with our key partners.

Thank you to all the partners who have contributed to this document.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Hamilton', written over a white background.

*Cllr Kevin Hamilton – Chair Housing Management Forum*

# Introduction

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Barrow Borough Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020–2025 introduces a fresh approach to tackling homelessness within our borough and incorporates the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. It provides the necessary framework for effective partnership working and for the delivery of efficiently managed and co-ordinated advice, housing and support services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

This strategy will set the agenda, enabling us to continue to meet the needs of people of the Borough and to eliminate the threat of homelessness from their lives. It sets out the actions we will take, remaining consistent in our approach to improve access to housing, supporting vulnerable people and minimising rough sleeping continues to be our priorities.

The strategy outlines:

- The challenges faced by our Borough in preventing homelessness
- How we developed this strategy
- What our priorities will be
- How we will achieve our priorities

We are committed to continual development and responding appropriately to changing demands and needs locally. This document will be reviewed yearly with completed priorities removed, new legislation changes added and progress acknowledged.

It is essential we do not work in isolation to meet the needs of people who may have multiple complex needs which extend beyond the basic need for a home. We need to ensure we can offer the appropriate advice and support enabling all homeless households including those who need extra help to find and sustain suitable accommodation. Partnership working can really help assist with preventing homelessness and offer housing options which are sustainable. It is recognised that homelessness is not always the key issue that a person or family are facing and we are committed to resolving the associated socioeconomic challenges by engaging with our partners to assist us in giving the best outcome we can for everyone. This strategy should be seen as a multi-agency document focused on prevention work.

The strategy underpins Barrow Borough Council's strategic aims to meet the Borough's housing needs and builds on the success of the previous strategy.

# Achievements So Far

All key priorities outlined in our previous strategy were achieved and include:

Priority Area	Objectives Achieved
<p><b>Increase accessibility of the private rented sector</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive preparation and provision to applicant’s information via leaflets and other media on relevant topics such as local support, S21 and the S8 process, Private Sector Landlords Directory.</li> <li>• Contact made with all existing along with any prospective landlords that have shown interest in being included within the Private Sector Landlords booklet.</li> <li>• Creation of a specialist ‘Housing Solutions Officer’ has been employed within the Homelessness Team, providing specialist liaison with the private sector and assisting applicants to move on.</li> <li>• Funding allocated for deposits and first month’s rent for eligible applicants. (Prevention Fund).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Major factor influencing homelessness is relationship breakdown</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homelessness officers regularly conduct mediation support to prevent worsening situations and to ensure full awareness of next steps is known. Appropriate advice given and sign posting to relevant support agencies made. Marital law considered and explained. Provision for emergency accommodation if appropriate.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Debt and financial hardship are increasingly prevalent issues affecting homeless households</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding Citizens Advice Barrow to carry out specialist debt advice surgery appointments on a weekly basis to address debt issues/mortgage advice/money management.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Domestic abuse continues to be a factor in homelessness and those approaching for advice and assistance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership created with Women’s Community Matters (WCM) to provide outreach specialist support to homeless applicants. Funding secured from MCHLG.</li> <li>• Pilot Project: The Council in partnership with WCM identified two units of accommodation to enhance support specifically for victims of domestic abuse and their families – Sanctuary Project.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improve working with young people aged 16 &amp; 17 to ensure a more consistent approach that best supports the young person</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Person’s Protocol established in partnership with Social Care and local partners e.g. Project John.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Prevent and reduce further rough sleeping</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented the provision of emergency accommodation arrangements for severe weather (SWEP).</li> <li>• Commitment to No Second Night Out (NSNO) county-wide.</li> <li>• Conducted rough sleepers count annually.</li> <li>• Assisted households through homelessness prevention grant with rent in advance and deposits.</li> </ul>

## Other Initiatives

Priority Area	Objectives Achieved
<b>Training – Homelessness Reduction Act</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have invested in our colleagues through the use of external and internal trainers, providing their expertise to our officers so that they can understand and interpret the changes of the Act and be effective in successfully preventing and ending homelessness for their cases.</li> </ul>
<b>IT Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have invested in a new Homelessness Case Management Software (CMS) system. This system is intuitive and assists the officers to ensure a succinct workflow process within the Homeless Team, mitigating the impact of the additional administration brought about by the HRA 2017. Its interactive qualities promote the officer/client relationship to enable joint responsibility for finding solutions effectively.</li> <li>We have been able to use this new system in order to produce detailed Personal Housing Plans, a new requirement of the HRA 2017, which are user friendly and provide the applicant with the resources and information they need in order to help themselves work to a successful outcome.</li> </ul>
<b>Triage Processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barrow Borough Council has enabled an easy self-referral process which ensures those presenting as homeless on the same day are given advice immediately as to what steps can be taken to assist their situation or prevent it from escalating. This is accessible digitally, and in person at the Town Hall during normal working hours, for non emergency referrals the system can also be accessed at all other times whilst an out-of-hours line is manned at all times by experienced officers.</li> </ul>
<b>Interim Accommodation Support Officer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The majority of clients who access emergency accommodation with Barrow Borough Council are either complex, multiple needs single people or complex families. In order to ensure they are supported towards successful outcomes, we have invested in an officer to assist them whilst they are in emergency accommodation. This also ensures that this accommodation is utilised efficiently and is available when needed for others, reducing our need to use any bed and breakfast.</li> </ul>

# Key Findings

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The 2020 Homelessness Review is available in full at [www.barrowbc.gov.uk](http://www.barrowbc.gov.uk), including local and national trends, performance statistics and feedback from partners.

As part of the review process in line with best practice, Barrow Borough Council examined the following local context data for this strategy:

- Economy and population statistics.
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- Comparative house prices
- Reasons for homelessness
- Which cohorts may be more likely to be homeless or risk of being homeless. For example, young people in need, care leavers and those with community care needs.
- Homelessness casework records and other local sources of data.
- The range of factors that may affect future levels of homelessness.

Trend patterns, current and future demand were determined, including housing and support resources available, ensuring the future strategic priorities set are based on realistic assumptions as to how they will be delivered in practice and collectively owned by all stakeholders within the district.

## **The Main Findings included:**

- The number of approaches for housing advice, prevention and relief each year is consistently around 525 people.
- Over 50% of homelessness results from only two reasons:
  - Friends or Family can no longer accommodate (26%);
  - End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (25%). Around one third of ASTs ended because the landlord wished to sell the property.
- Successful outcomes for Prevention and Relief duty were 71.2% and 65.4% respectively, which is favourable against the national average of 57.5% and 42.1%. Barrow also performed very well against regional figures of 59.3% and 44.1%.
- Main Duty acceptances currently stand at 29.2% post HRA 2017, which is significantly lower than the national average of 58.8%.
- More than 70% of applications following the HRA have been single applicants without children. This is significant in terms of availability of one-bedroom accommodation, Additionally this group are also likely to have multiple complex needs.
- Around one in two applicants disclosed a mental health problem or a history of mental health issues; one in four people disclosed an offending history and one in four applicants had a history of repeat homelessness. Often applicants disclose these needs alongside each other.

# Rough Sleeping

The most recent official rough sleeper estimate was carried out on 13th November 2019. The verified figure was 3 which, although a relatively low number, did represent a 300% increase for the Borough based on the 2018 figure of 0. The three years preceding were 2017: 0, 2016: 4 and 2015: 4. Local intelligence was gathered from a variety of local sources including Cumbria Police, The Salvation Army, Churches Together, Unity and Furness Homeless Support Group. The count was verified by Homeless Link

## Comments from Barrow Borough Council's Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator

*Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators (RSC) were funded under the Rough Sleeper Initiative, their role primarily a data-gathering research post aimed at identifying the causes of individuals rough sleeping and any gaps in service provision impacting on those individuals rough sleeping in our communities. In addition to examine how services supporting rough sleepers operate and interact RSC's aim to examine individuals' experiences to determine the types of services that might be best placed to support them. Meeting with rough sleepers and listening to their experiences, coordinating services around them and suggesting new approaches.*

*The RSC's overall aim is to contribute to planning service delivery at a county level, taking into account that Cumbria is a diverse county. To this end a number of key issues were identified by the districts and each RSC was given responsibility for researching one of them. As RSC for South Lakes and Barrow I was tasked to research prison release. This piece of work aims to examine Through the Gate Services and Resettlement services, prisons application of the duty to refer and the unique problems experienced by individuals who are homeless on release. Research has been somewhat hampered by the Coronavirus outbreak as services are put under pressure by this crisis, however it is planned that this research will still be completed by the end of the project. Problems with hospital discharge were also raised by the Homelessness team and I have conducted research into this issue in Barrow, my colleague in the North area is tasked with working on this key issue at a county level.*

*Barrow has very small numbers of rough sleepers and these are split between those who arrive in Barrow from out of area. Under the HRAAct this cohort would be advised of their options and either assisted financially to be reconnected to their own Local Authority or if deemed to be in priority need accommodated temporarily and then referred back to their Local Authority formerly. The second category is those who are unable to maintain accommodation due to their complex and multiple needs. Those who fall into the second category often have associated drug and alcohol issues and are hard to engage. In research with organisations working with rough sleepers most expressed that rough sleepers are relatively rare in Barrow but there is a much larger population of 'sofa-surfers' in the area. BBC has responded to this identified cohort and through recent bids for funding from MCHLG they have secured additional funds to create a 'Housing First Model' to address the needs of this group.*

*Having looked into services in Barrow the community is well-served by a variety of statutory and non-statutory organisations and the community is generous and supportive towards those in need with charitable groups being well supported by volunteering and donations. The community based charitable groups work well together and are generally aware of services to signpost to. Sometimes there are misconceptions about statutory services.*

*As the Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator it has been possible to improve the knowledge of this sector so they understand that Homelessness Services work to the MCHLG code of guidance; which does not always meet the expectations of the non statutory agencies. Most organisations felt they would benefit from being better informed about other services in the area, referral processes etc. Therefore, I developed a service directory for people working with rough sleepers and will be sharing this with appropriate services via the Homeless Department at Barrow Borough Council.*

*Coronavirus has impacted on the work the RSCs are able to do as services are closed to the public and busy managing their clients through the crisis. It has also given us a unique opportunity to examine our statutory and non-statutory services capacity to be responsive to the changing needs of our communities. The RSC continue to seek to connect with and support rough sleepers and are engaged in writing and coordinating move-on plans for those that are being temporarily accommodated.*

*We are continuing our research where possible, talking to services and individuals and examining models of support that may prove useful. As the lockdown lifts the RSC will continue to work with the districts and local services to monitor rough-sleeping and ensure support is coordinated around individuals that require it.*

# Domestic Abuse

Barrow Borough Council is committed to assisting victims of abuse and has developed a successful working partnership with Women's Community Matters (WCM) to facilitate this and ensure anyone suffering domestic abuse is given the specialist support they need so that they can navigate their way towards an abuse-free environment.

## Rebecca Robson, Senior Officer at Women's Community Matters reports:

*Over the last six years, Women's Community Matters has continued to develop its offer to victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Barrow Borough Council has played a significant role in the development of services for victims and survivors of domestic abuse in our community, as well as for those experiencing other forms of abuse and vulnerability.*

*There are a number of strands to our work supporting victims/survivors of abuse and Barrow Borough Council Housing Service is an integral part of each of them.*

*#ibelieveyou is the overarching name for all our support for women who have, or are experiencing domestic abuse. The name of the project is significant for women who come to us for support, as well as for referring agencies who tell us that it makes a difference. Women know they will be believed and that can help give them the confidence to speak out for the first time. Two women who accessed support from this project have spoken at events and delivered training to police officers in Barrow. Officers praised the bravery of the women, with one saying it was the best training he had ever attended and that it would significantly impact on his professional practice in the future. One of these women received support from Barrow Borough Council's Housing Service alongside the support she received from WCM. She is now in full time employment and supporting other victims and survivors of abuse. Her positive experiences of partnership working not only helped her family, but are serving as an example to others and helping create trusting relationships between vulnerable families, third sector organisations and the public sector.*

*We offer a range of activities and support to enable women and girls who have, who are, or are at risk of, experiencing domestic abuse. This support helps victims/survivors to:*

- *Access crisis support and advice, including that relating to housing*
- *Access practical support*
- *Access ongoing emotional support*
- *Recover in a safe environment supported by people who understand and who care*
- *Be less susceptible to re-victimisation*
- *Reduce their risk*
- *Identify the things they are good at and the things they enjoy*
- *Best support their children*
- *Make positive choices about their future*
- *Access specialist support they or their family might need*

*A Crisis and Prevention Worker who is based within the centre, and who works closely with Barrow Borough Council Housing Service and other housing departments and councils across the county, specifically supports women and their families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse.*

*We have specially trained workers who understand domestic abuse and its effects and have knowledge of the extra support and advice available from a range of other organisations women may need. They offer support, care and kindness as women seek to rebuild their lives, make changes, or find their own peace and understanding. We work closely with Barrow Borough Council Housing Service on this project which has developed over the last six years and is now integrated into the support offered by the Housing Service to those in temporary accommodation.*

*The one-to-one practical and emotional support is supplemented by access to the Centre's Clothes Bank which offers a range of clothes, small household items, toiletries and treats which are all donated by the community and organised and cared for by volunteers. There are also a number of courses and groups available, some of which address domestic abuse directly; others which have a greater focus on self-esteem; and some which are about developing social connections.*

*The **Butterfly Group** runs for six sessions and offers a safe space for women to discuss their experiences; to access professional input on the effects of domestic abuse, including on children; and to benefit from the support of other women with similar experiences. Women are supported to regain their sense of self-worth, self-love and self-esteem which enables the women to make positive life choices and to make changes in their own lives.*

*The **My Relationships & Me** course enables participants to explore their relationships and the impact they have; to identify healthy relations; to consider the role we play in our relationships; communication; and the future.*

***Beautiful Women & Beautiful Me** are two six-week courses aimed at supporting women to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Women who have been in abusive relationships find they can rediscover their sense of self which is fundamental to making positive choices and changes.*

*There are a range of other groups and activities including Cooking Together, Mindfulness, Introduction to Maths, Knit and Natter, Art Group, and Drop-in sessions. These are all opportunities for social connection and help women move on in their lives. There are a range of opportunities for women to become involved in community action projects, to plan events and celebrations, to become volunteers and peer mentors, and to become the staff and trustees of the future.*

*Cumbria Domestic Abuse Champions' Network is delivered by Women's Community Matters. The network was re-launched in Cumbria in 2018 and Barrow Borough Council Housing Service has always been a member, supporter, and key driver of the partnership. The network offers training and ongoing information and support to those in the community who support victims of domestic and sexual abuse. In 2018-19, 310 different people attended the network training and there were 314 attendances at network meetings around the county. In 2020, Barrow Borough Council Housing Service enabled the network to apply for additional funding to allow it to continue.*

In 2019-20, **566 different** women received support for domestic abuse.

For the years 2020-25 we anticipate the following numbers taking into account the expected increases we expected over the next two years related to Covid-19:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of different women	792	792	650	650	650

# The Bigger Picture

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## National Policy and our Local Response

Nationally, homelessness is increasing. Research into the causes of homelessness has identified a number of factors, some which relate to the wider state of the economy, the effects of Covid-19 and the housing market, and others which are personal to the individual family.

Personal factors which trigger homelessness include relationship breakdown, mental health and addiction issues, discharge from prison and leaving care system. The immediate causes of homelessness have remained fairly consistent over the years. The circumstances in which families become homeless tend to differ from those of single homeless individuals with the latter experiencing more chaotic lifestyles.

There are a number of challenges particularly apparent in Barrow-in-Furness:

- Increasingly, people are presenting as statutory homeless due to an assured shorthold tenancy ending. Domestic abuse and friends and family no longer being able to accommodate are also significant reasons why people become homeless in Barrow.
- Deprivation and associated poverty/low incomes are key barriers for accessing housing and maintaining stable and financially sustainable tenancies. Access to employment is a key mechanism for preventing homelessness. Poor financial management and failure to maximise household income also limits people's ability to access and sustain housing.
- Increasing difficulties experienced by people under 35 years to secure affordable, independent accommodation – particularly for low income and unemployed young people. Whilst there is a relatively good supply of accommodation of this type, it is often not affordable for this group, with people who are subjected to benefit restrictions facing affordability difficulties.

As part of the review, relevant strategic documents have been evaluated and key actions incorporated to ensure effectiveness and success of resources and appropriate partnerships.

## Where we want to be: Our challenge, vision and priorities

Our homelessness challenge is to ensure there is sufficient support and accommodation options available of the right type, in the right place and good quality which people can afford to live in.

### Our collective vision for homelessness is:

To prevent homelessness and to meet the housing support needs of vulnerable households through the provision of high-quality, accessible accommodation, support, information and advice.

We are strongly committed to our vision, whilst being realistic about the challenges we face in trying to achieve this. We know we will not be able to solve all of the issues overnight, but we can make sure as a partnership we move towards achieving our vision over the next five years.

# Covid-19 No Return to Business as Usual

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Faced with a problem we could never have imagined when we started to formulate our new strategy; Covid-19 has required the Homeless Service to refocus and respond to all the difficulties associated with it. We have always had a can-do approach to our work and have adapted quickly, resourcefully and innovatively to respond to this unprecedented crisis.

Nationally, it has been reported that large numbers of rough sleepers have been brought in off the streets, entrenched in their lifestyle, often without hope and unable to secure any safe, affordable stable accommodation. The response has seen over 90% of rough sleepers being offered accommodation and what came with it was an opportunity 'not to return to business as usual' therefore capturing the opportunity for positive change. We wait to see what the Government's directive will be in dealing with the ongoing need for accommodation for this group of people, and they will be 'setting out their stall' with the announcement of funding and help to meet the extra costs associated with 'keeping everyone in for good' in the forthcoming weeks and months.

Locally, we are indeed very fortunate in not having a large rough sleeper population. Although we saw a rise in estimates for 2019, our returns over the last four years have never been higher than four. We do however, have a sofa surfing culture in the area which has caused some increase in the need for assistance during the pandemic, together with hospital discharges needed to free up bed spaces to deal with the virus and prison discharges, all of which had to be accommodated to prevent the imminence of rough sleeping. We have been able to meet this demand by re-purposing some of our own housing stock to provide basic accommodation, and we have continued to work with these applicants to try and move them into more secure accommodation throughout this difficult and challenging time.

We also recognise that this is a real opportunity to change individual's lives through the unexpected and will continue to deliver effective solutions at a local level through collaboration, partnerships, working with other statutory and non-statutory agencies to ensure we do all we can to promote the chance for change and sustain positive outcomes.

The key messages we will promote are:

- Getting people in
- Care and protect
- Help and support

We will continue to consider equality and diversity in all that we do to meet the demands of Covid-19 reviewing working practices in order to adapt our delivery of service ensuring we are meeting the needs of our customers and our employees.

# Key Priorities and Objectives

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Our Vision is:

*To prevent homelessness and meet the housing support needs of vulnerable households through the provision of high quality and accessible accommodation, support, information and advice.*

## Key Priorities

Following consultation with our stakeholders and an analysis of local needs by reviewing our homelessness data and having regard to the impact of external factors such as the effects of Covid-19, employment opportunities and the welfare benefit reforms, the key priorities have been identified as:

- Ensure people are well informed about their housing options
- Prevent people from becoming homeless
- Assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that their homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support
- Support people to recover from their experience and maintain their accommodation so they do not become homeless again
- Enable people to secure homes that they can afford and maintain

## Priorities and Objectives 2020-2025

### **Priority 1: Ensure people are well informed about their housing options**

#### **Objectives**

- To raise awareness and promote the homelessness and housing options service with the public and partner agencies
- To ensure there is easy access to high quality information about the services provided and where to get help
- To improve customer service, involvement and satisfaction

### **Priority 2: Prevent people from becoming homeless as early as possible**

#### **Objectives**

- To further develop and improve the prevention tools to assist households in different situations and to meet local need
- To actively support, promote and develop partnership networks to ensure a coordinated and multi agency approach to homelessness prevention
- To develop strong protocols for multi-agency working to support and appropriately refer individuals and families at risk.

- To design and implement early and targeted interventions for groups identified as higher risk of homelessness.

**Priority 3: Assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support**

**Objectives**

- To review systems and processes to ensure the Homelessness Reduction Act requirements are fully implemented
- Strengthen partnerships with local housing related support providers and other organisations who provide accommodation and support to homeless persons
- Review temporary accommodation provision and ensure it is adequate to meet local need
- Reinforce commitments to minimise the use of bed and breakfast provision particularly for families with children and maintain zero usage for 16-17 year olds

**Priority 4: Support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness**

**Objectives**

- To review the effectiveness of the tenancy sustainment service provided by the Council and ensure those most at risk of becoming homeless or losing their accommodation are assisted
- To maximise referrals to housing related support providers to assist people to sustain their accommodation and receive the support they require
- To develop financial inclusion/money management support in conjunction with ensuring a coordinated approach to offering advice on housing benefit, debt and welfare benefit – CAB Surgery.

**Priority 5: Enable people to secure homes they can afford and maintain**

**Objectives**

- To ensure adequate provision of housing to meet housing need in the Borough to include more supported housing and consider work around the affordable housing strategy.
- To review and monitor the Council's Allocation Scheme Cumbria Choice to ensure best use of stock and that social housing properties are let to those most in need
- To develop work with private landlords and initiatives that will improve access to the private rented market locally
- To ensure those ready to move on from supported accommodation can do so in a timely way

Meeting the overall aims and objectives of the Strategy and the delivery of key actions will lead to service improvements for customers.

The voluntary sector plays a key role in providing housing-related information and advice, for example the Citizens Advice Bureau and Age Concern. The Council will continue to work with the voluntary sector as part of its homeless prevention work. The Council fund CAB to carry out a surgery within the Housing Service to assist vulnerable clients. Moving forward from the pandemic the Council will work

with Community Hubs and CAB to consider how non-statutory agencies are key to playing an integral part in the overall pathway to better outcomes. We will build on robust links to provide ongoing support for vulnerable clients to prevent homelessness.

## Delivery of the Strategy

It is difficult to assess the full impact of Covid-19. It is possible there will be increasing numbers of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. This will impact on the level of resources required to meet this demand and deliver effective services.

We are experiencing an increasing complexity in the support needs amongst homeless people. This also impacts on the resources needed to manage these cases and requires continued effective work with partners to highlight the need for housing-related support.

Any changes to the homelessness prevention grant which funds many of the homeless prevention initiatives would be a risk to the delivery of the Strategy. However, we are not aware of any reductions to the government grants currently received.

The risks also include the current uncertainty with the economic climate together with Universal Credit, failing tenancies and demand for social housing.

## Monitoring and Reviewing

The actions detailed throughout the Strategy have been compiled into a detailed Action Plan (see **Appendix A**). The Strategy and Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed annually to ensure the outcomes meet local need and government policy. These reviews will be carried out in partnership with the agencies that have assisted in the development of the Strategy and Action Plan. The first annual review will be completed in September 2021.

This Strategy covers a five-year period and will run until end of 2025. In order to ensure the continued relevance of the Strategy and Action Plan over the five years, additional actions may be developed and implemented and existing actions changed or updated in line with legislation or operating practices.

## Appendix A

### Barrow Borough Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

## Action Plan 2020-2025

Key Priority	Objectives	Strategic Aims	By When	Lead Officer
<b>1</b> Ensure people are well informed about their housing options	To raise awareness and promote the Homelessness and Housing Options Service with the public and partner agencies.	Attend team meetings and other networks to promote the work of the Homelessness Housing Options Service.	Ongoing	Operations Manager/ Lead SAO
	To ensure there is easy access to high quality information about the services provided and where to get help.	Continue to develop information on the website and leaflets available.	September 2021	Operations Manager/ Lead SAO
	To improve customer service, involvement and satisfaction.	Develop mechanisms for obtaining feedback from customers.	September 2021	Operations Manager/ Lead SAO
<b>2</b> Prevent people from becoming homeless as early as possible	To further develop and improve the prevention tools to assist households in different situations to meet local need.	Develop prevention tools to ensure they are robust and accessible.  This includes access to Discretionary Housing Payments, the availability of a prevention fund, rent deposits, home visits, joint working and access to specialist advice services ie, CAB.	Initial review by September 2021	Operations Manager/ Lead SAO
	To actively support, promote and develop partnership networks to ensure a co-ordinated and multi-agency approach to homelessness prevention.	Linked to promotion of the service with all partners, develop and promote coordinated and multi-agency approach to achieve buy in by all agencies.  This will include partnership working with District Homelessness Teams – strategic Homelessness Group.	Ongoing	Operations Manager/Lead SAO
	To develop strong protocols for multi-agency working to support and appropriately refer individuals and families.	Review referral arrangements to support agencies that may assist to prevent homelessness.	Ongoing	Lead SAO
	To develop 'Housing First Model' – creating dedicated support and accommodation for complex needs vulnerable cases.	Develop unique scheme for clients with complex needs who would find it difficult to sustain a tenancy in generic housing.	June 20 September 2020	Operations Manager/Lead SAO

Key Priority	Objectives	Strategic Aims	By When	Lead Officer
<b>3</b> Assist people as soon possible if they become homeless so that homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support	Continually review systems and processes to ensure Homelessness Reduction Act requirements are fully implemented.	Review what accommodation we have available to ensure we can achieve the relief duty for all eligible households.	Ongoing	Operations Manager/Lead SAO
	Strengthen partnerships with local housing support providers and other organisations which provide accommodation and support to homeless clients.	Review local provision to ensure robust referral and move-on arrangements are in place. Consider how support services provided could be developed further.	Ongoing	Operations Manager/Lead SAO
<b>4</b> Support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness	To continue to review the effectiveness of tenancy sustainment service and ensure clients at most risk of becoming homeless or losing accommodation are assisted.	Review effectiveness of tenancy sustainment service.	Ongoing	Lead SAO
	To maximise referrals to housing-related support providers to assist people to sustain their accommodation and receive the support they require.	Encourage referrals to providers and monitor outcomes.	Ongoing	Lead SAO/ Homelessness Team
	To develop financial inclusion/ money management service. Co-ordinated approach to offering advice on housing benefit, debt and welfare advice – CAB Surgery within Housing weekly appointments.	To ensure there are initiatives in place to help support homeless clients or those at threat of becoming homeless.	Ongoing	Operations Manager/Lead SAO
<b>5</b> Enable people to secure homes they can afford to maintain	To engage with the implementation of the reviewed Council's Allocation Policy – Cumbria Choice to ensure best use of stock – homeless clients are banded appropriately.	Monitor the newly reviewed Allocation Policy and engage with operational working groups to ensure transparent and fair allocations.	Ongoing - new policy & IT platform due to go live March '21	Operations Manager/Lead SAO
	To develop work with private landlords and initiatives that will improve access to the private rented market locally.	Look at resource and future posts within the homelessness team	September 2021	Operations Manager/Lead SAO
	To ensure those ready for move on from supported accommodation can do so in a timely manner.	Continue to engage in the multi agency partnerships with support providers to facilitate this.	Ongoing	Lead SAO / Homelessness Team
	To assist all homeless clients who have accessed temporary accommodation during Covid-19 to move onto secure accommodation.	Continue to engage with private sector landlords and support providers to secure the most appropriate accommodation.	Ongoing	Operations Manager/Lead SAO