

South Ribble

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2025 / 2029



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Foreword

Welcome to Our Updated Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2025–2029).

This strategy explains how South Ribble Borough Council and our partners plan to prevent and reduce homelessness over the next five years.

Homelessness can have a serious impact on people's lives. Without a stable home, it is harder to stay healthy, get an education, find work, or take part in the community.

The causes of homelessness are often complicated and varied. Simply giving someone a home does not fix the deeper issues that may have led to their situation. To truly tackle homelessness - especially rough sleeping - we need a joined-up approach. That means offering the right support and advice at the right time and stepping in early to stop homelessness before it starts.

Although the Council has a legal duty to prevent homelessness and support vulnerable people, we cannot do it alone. This strategy focuses on working together with other organisations. We are committed to leading this partnership to make a real difference for people in South Ribble.

We have identified four main priorities that will guide our work over the next five years. These will help us respond to new challenges and give people more housing options.

We aim to:

- Prevent homelessness as early as possible
- Work with partners to create smart, targeted solutions
- Fund services that support people at risk of homelessness
- Help people make informed choices about their housing

There is a lot to do, especially in today's tough environment, but we are committed to supporting happy, healthy communities across South Ribble.

Councillor Clare Hunter
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Health and Wellbeing

Introduction

Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 2029 reviews, strengthens, and replaces our existing Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.

The Homelessness Act 2002 (Section 1 (1)) places a statutory duty on Housing Authorities to conduct a homelessness review for their district and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review every 5 years as a minimum. This document encompasses both duties.

Additional duties have been introduced via the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 - to produce a strategy that involves partners in earlier identification and intervention to prevent homelessness.

As part of the homelessness strategy, housing authorities should also develop effective action plans to help ensure that the objectives, targets, and milestones are achieved.

To be effective the homelessness strategy will also be based on realistic assumptions and be developed and jointly owned by partners.

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 also placed an expectation on Local Authorities to produce a Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The 2022 Ending Rough Sleeping for Good strategy set out how the last Government and its partners set out an expectation to work together to deliver on their manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping in the life span of the previous Parliament. It also laid the foundations for long-term system change to end rough sleeping sustainably and for good. This work is expected to continue under the new Government elected in July 2024.

We have worked with key partners to establish this strategy and sought commitment from agencies across a variety of sectors to formulate a collaborative proactive partnership approach to the prevention of homelessness.

Defining Homelessness

The Housing Act 1996, as amended, defines homelessness as a person who has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere, which is available for their occupation, and which that person has a legal right to occupy.

A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or their accommodation is a moveable structure and there is nowhere it can lawfully be placed to provide accommodation. A person is threatened with homelessness if they are likely to experience one of the above within 56 days.

Prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018, 'threatened with homelessness' occurred at just 28 days. Whilst the Act doubled the threshold in which local housing authorities must carry out prevention work, 56 days is still a relatively short period of time.

This time is extremely stressful for customers who worry for their families, and who need to quickly search for a new home that is affordable and close to their schools, places of work and their family and friends.

The definition of homelessness is more than just those without a home. It includes those without a home that is legally theirs, homes that are not reasonable to occupy due to external factors such as the threat of violence or being a victim of crime, homes that are unsuitable due to their condition and it recognises that not all homes are traditional fixed structures.

A wide definition is helpful because it means local authorities will have to work with a wide range of customers in need, however the definition means that the council's duties extend across a larger customer group, adding further pressures to the service.

The analysis of data over the period since the introduction of our last Homelessness Strategy shows that demand on the Housing Options service has been increasing year on year both in terms of numbers presenting, complexity of support needs and we have also seen the emergence of new cohorts of customers.

The demand for social housing has grown exponentially without seeing the same increase in the supply of new affordable social housing and the numbers of units in the borough remains largely static as compared to stock levels of five years ago.

Another factor that has become increasingly apparent since the last homelessness strategy was produced is that the private rented housing sector within the borough has become largely inaccessible for those who fall into the lower income bracket and for those reliant on benefits.

Data also shows us that a very significant number of private landlords have sold or are selling their properties thus reducing the pool of available accommodation further and adding an additional burden upon waiting lists for social housing.

An emerging market in the borough and nationally is that of supported accommodation provided by Community Interest Companies who operate largely on a model of HMO style accommodation provision and provide low level support to customers on a weekly basis.

This type of accommodation (Supported Exempt Accommodation) attracts a much higher rate of housing benefit has grown exponentially as have the numbers of companies providing this type of housing.

Greater regulation of this type of accommodation including quality and quantity of support and property condition will shortly commence with Local Authorities playing a key role around enforcement following a review and update of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act (2023).

As we look forward over the next five years our vision is to work collaboratively to prevent and reduce homelessness and maximise options and support for those in housing need.

Throughout this strategy we aim to:

Respond to the threat homelessness by ensuring that individuals have timely access to specialist housing advice, homes and person-centred support.

Adopt best practice and innovative approaches in response to homelessness and its prevention and relief

Formulate and lead a collaborative partnership of agencies which at its core has a commitment to prevention of homelessness and increasing the supply of affordable social housing solutions

Increase the type and range of both affordable and supported housing options available in the borough

Develop a better understanding of the causes of homelessness through improved data capture and analysis and utilise this to work in a more proactive way so we can maximise the prospects of preventing homelessness and limiting its negative impacts.

We will commission services from providers that share our values and commitment to homelessness prevention, and we will continue to advocate for the most vulnerable in our communities.

Understanding Homelessness and Housing Demand in South Ribble

Whilst it is generally accepted that we are in the midst of a national crisis and many of the features that contribute to this are replicated throughout the country it is vitally important to recognise issues in a South Ribble context and to understand local trends and pressure points so we can develop strategies and policies to respond to these challenges and to work proactively in developing housing solutions.

South Ribble Population

113552
(midpoint 2023)

Total number of dwellings

51800
of which 90 %
are privately
owned

Average house price

£207000
which is 6.5%
increase on 2024

**For home
ownership**
the average
house price
is **4.5** x the
average salary
in the borough

**Average private
rented property**
ranges from
£518 pcm (1 bed)
to
£1194 pcm (4 bed)

Homelessness Approaches to SRBC

Threatened with homelessness
56 days

2021 - **734**

2022 - **716**

2023 - **837**

2024 - **945**

2025(5 months) - **506**

55% of approaches are aged between 25-44

22% of approaches are aged between 18-24

Main Reasons for Approach

PRS tenancy ended

13.02%

(of which **75%** are no fault)

Friends/Family no longer willing/able to accommodate

18.20%

Domestic abuse
9.31%

Approximately **12%** of customers have multiple support needs

Selectmove Waiting List by Size

Current waiting list
SRBC total: 1995

1 Bed - **1021**

2 Bed - **589**

3 Bed - **299**

4 Bed - **86**

38.3% Increase in 5 years

Verified Rough Sleepers in the borough 2024:
5

Average wait times in the last year to be housed in social housing

4+ beds
123 weeks

3 bed
91 weeks

2 bed
56 weeks

1bed
68 weeks

Social housing stock in South Ribble

5,476 units = **3.6%** increase over 5 years

Units of homeless (temporary) accommodation = **36** with a **100%** occupancy rate.

Social housing as % of total stock **10.57%** as opposed to **16%** nationally

Number of lets in 2024: **366** = **14%** increase in last 5 years

80 new affordable units to be delivered annually (Target)

1.

Develop and lead a collaborative partnership of organisations with homelessness prevention and increased access to accommodation as its core aims

Together with Chorley Borough Council we will continue to develop and expand the Strategic Housing Partnership which incorporates all key strategic partners with whom we can work collaboratively responding to challenges and driving through improvement and change.

We will seek commitment from key strategic partnerships to embed an ethos of homelessness prevention into their work as part of a shared strategy and as a result we will reduce the numbers presenting to the Council at crisis point.

We will establish a 'Prevention Charter' and invite key partners to sign up to its principles at a senior/corporate level and publish this. Once established we will embed into our work and that of the Strategic Housing partnership.

We will expand our offer of tailored advice and support by forming an alliance of support agencies and social prescribers to support those most vulnerable to homelessness and to avoid duplication.

Formulate and deliver an educational homelessness prevention toolkit aimed at young people which enables those aged 16-25 to make informed decisions and choices around housing. To be developed and delivered in conjunction with SRBC Youth Council.

2.

Prevent and respond to homelessness through Early intervention and Innovative personalised solutions

We will establish early intervention protocols with all key landlord partners to identify tenancies vulnerable to failure with a view to sustaining the accommodation and reducing the threat of homelessness.

We will strengthen existing protocols for care leavers and young people leaving supported accommodation to ensure that their chances securing and maintaining secure affordable accommodation is maximised.

We will use improved data to proactively identify households at risk of tenancy failure and link into appropriate support agencies. By adopting this approach, we will seek to reduce the numbers of households that present to us in crisis and therefore increasing our chances of preventing homelessness.

We will increase our advocacy offer to include Court representation for the most vulnerable customers at hearings and undertake an awareness campaign linked to this service. By adopting this approach we will increase the numbers of cases where homelessness as a result of possession action is prevented.

We will establish a fund that can provide rapid solutions to households threatened with homelessness and assist in maintaining tenancies through taking a holistic approach to prevention and sustainment. Once established the fund can be accessed at short notice to address issues impacting security and sustainment of accommodation with a view to removing the treat of homelessness for some of our most vulnerable customers.

3.

Reduce time spent in temporary accommodation and end hotel usage

Negotiate for a guaranteed housing offer pathway for homeless families placed in temporary accommodation for longer than 4 months. Once achieved this will not only have a positive impact on customers in a housing context but also from a health and financial perspective.

Extend our support offer so that every household placed in temporary accommodation has an allocated support worker from the commencement of their placement with the aim of minimizing the length of stay and increasing preparedness for independent living.

Fund a furniture package for tenants of temporary accommodation that they can also utilise in permanent accommodation. This initiative will ensure that customers can move into properties without delay and alleviate some of the financial burden of setting up a new home.

Explore with partners additional provision of temporary housing solutions including repurposing of existing units and empty properties to increase capacity and remove the need to use commercial hotels.

This includes exploring the potential for new collaborations with landlords and property owners in the borough.

Develop new accommodation models that provide security but are flexible enough to respond to new and emerging challenges from an increasingly diverse customer base.

4.

Develop and Implement Sustainable Supported and Affordable Housing Solutions

Develop relationship with providers and developers to identify opportunities to increase supply of affordable social housing in the borough that align with the needs of households faced with homeless or that are in housing need.

Advocate for the use of tenancies by registered providers that provide tenants with the highest levels of security.

Lobby for the increase in number of local lettings plans and s106 arrangements aimed at areas of high demand and or low supply in the borough with landlords and developers.

Seek to ensure that those households with strong links to specific communities/areas are prioritised for housing.

Work with providers of exempt accommodation to ensure that the supported housing offer in South Ribble meets the highest standards in terms of property condition and support package.

Delivering the Strategy

The strategic priorities within the Strategy will be delivered and monitored through an action plan, which will expand on the commitments and actions set out in this strategy.

The action plan will be reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs, alongside policy and legislative changes. We will measure our performance against targets set and provide regular progress updates to customers, partners and politicians.

Key performance monitoring information relating to the prevention of homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation provision is provided monthly and feeds into the Councils Corporate Plan and informs local and national performance indicators.

We have identified four key strategic objectives which form the basis of this refreshed strategy and underpin our approach to homelessness prevention over the next five years.

They are;

- 1** Develop and lead a collaborative partnership of organisations with homelessness prevention and increased access to affordable accommodation as its key aims
- 2** Prevent and respond to homelessness through early intervention and innovate personalised solutions
- 3** Reduce time spent in temporary accommodation and end hotel usage
- 4** Develop and implement sustainable supported and affordable housing solutions.

The plans set out within this Strategy are ambitious, however with the commitment of our key partners and a proactive and flexible approach we can respond to the evolving needs of people within the district, as we continue the journey to providing timely, suitable and innovative responses to the threat of homelessness

Priority 1

Develop and lead on collaborative partnership of organisations with homelessness prevention and increased access to accommodation as its core aims.

Project	Who	When	Impact/Measure
i: Develop and expand on the Strategic Housing Partnership.	SRBC Housing Team in conjunction with CBC colleagues	Ongoing	Greater partnership working and adoption of common policies contributing to KPI targets.
ii: Establish a borough wide prevention charter to incorporate key partners and publish.	SRBC Housing team led in conjunction with key partners	To be in place and published by April 2026	Positive impact on prevention of homelessness KPI's.
iii: Formulate and deliver an educational homelessness prevention toolkit aimed at 16-25.	SRBC Housing Team in conjunction with Youth Council	Being delivered during 26/27 academic year.	Increased engagement with 16-26 age cohort and reduction in presentations.

Priority 2

Prevent and respond to homelessness through early intervention and innovative personalised solutions.

Project	Who	When	Impact/Measure
i: Refresh and strengthen existing early intervention protocols with key partners. Roll out to new partners to ensure consistent approaches across the district.	SRBC Housing Team with key partners i.e RP's/Social Care/Hospitals/ Probation etc	December 2025	Ensure a consistent boroughwide approach. Increase numbers presenting at prevention stage as opposed to relief. Maintain relatively low numbers of registered providers with a view to overall reduction.
ii: Refresh and increase the provision of Court advocacy offer for those faced with possession action.	SRBC Housing Team	In place by December 2025	Increase in numbers assisted at Court. Increase in number of positive interventions at possession hearings which contribute to overall prevention targets. Increase in awareness of assistance.
iii: Establish and launch an early intervention fund. The fund should be able to respond to the threat of homelessness in an agile way and also address barriers to clients accessing affordable alternative accommodation in a timely manner and reduce move on time.	SRBC Housing team in conjunction with benefits Team	December 2025.	Contribute to an increase in prevention and relief KPI's and reduce waiting times for decisions around assistance.

Priority 3

Reduce time spent in temporary accommodation and end hotel usage.

Project	Who	When	Impact/Measure
i: Lobby registered provider partners with a view to establishing a guaranteed offer pathway for homeless families placed in temporary accommodation for longer than 4 months.	SRBC Housing Team together with Progress Housing group and Sanctuary Housing	Target to be in place Jan 2026	Reduce overall length of stays in temporary accommodation. Positive impacts on customer satisfaction/health/educational attainment etc.
ii: Extend support offer to all residents of temporary accommodation from commencement to move on.	SRBC Housing Team together with SRBC Social Prescribing Team and Commissioned Support Providers	December 2025	Increase in tenancy satisfaction and reduction in tenancy failure. Positive impact on Hb collection through greater advocacy/assistance.
iii: Fund and co ordinate a furniture scheme for residents of temporary accommodation. Items from the scheme will be gifted to reuse when move to permanent accommodation is secured.	SRBC Housing Team in conjunction with progress Housing Group and Sanctuary Housing	December 2025	Minimise reasons for tenancy failure and speed up move on process from temporary accommodation.
iv: Explore with partners repurposing of buildings to act as additional temporary accommodation and/or supported housing with a view to eliminating commercial hotel use.	SRBC Housing Team and all registered providers in the borough	Ongoing progress to be reviewed April 2026	Numbers of units of temporary accommodation stock/supported housing stock increases whilst the use of commercial hotels is eliminated.

Priority 4

Develop and implement sustainable supported and affordable housing solutions.

Project	Who	When	Impact/Measure
i: Strongly advocate for the increased provision of affordable social housing in the borough and for the adoption of local lettings schemes to prioritise the local housing demand.	SRBC Housing Team in conjunction with Planning team and all registered providers operating in the borough	Ongoing and to be reviewed on an annual basis.	Ensure that the target of 80 new affordable units per year is met/exceeded. Numbers of local lettings agreements in place increases.
ii: Work with providers of exempt accommodation to establish referral pathways and to ensure that properties are of good quality and that appropriate meaningful support is provided to residents.	SRBC Housing Team in conjunction with SRBC Benefits and Environmental Health together with all providers.	Ongoing and to be reviewed on a monthly basis.	Increased number of positive referrals being made. Increase in tenancy sustainment and reduction in tenancy failure.

Glossary of Terms

Community Interest Company	A specific type of limited company designed to benefit the community rather than private shareholders
Homelessness Act 2002	A piece of legislation that extended the categories of those considered to be in priority need.
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Significant piece of legislation that revised key statutory targets and stages for LA's to work to in the prevention of homelessness
HMO	House in multiple occupation. Usually, a property sub divided into single occupancy rooms for non-related individuals.
Prevention Duty	Legal obligation placed on LA's to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness 56 days prior.
Relief Duty	Legal obligation on LA's to help homeless households secure suitable accommodation.

Glossary of Terms

Renters Rights Act	A piece of legislation which abolishes fixed term tenancies and 'no fault evictions. Introduces periodic tenancies and the Decent Home Standard in the private rented sector.
Supported Exempt accommodation	Housing that combines accommodation with the provision of support to those with specific needs.
Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Bill (2023)	A piece of legislation which aims to improve the condition and oversight of supported exempt accommodation. Strengthens the powers of LA's.
Temporary Accommodation	Accommodation provided to eligible households in priority need by local authorities following a homelessness application
Threatened with homelessness	The LA considers that households are threatened with homelessness 56 days before their rights to occupy legally end.
1996 Housing Act	A piece of legislation which defined the duties of LA's to assist and accommodate those threatened with homelessness and set out priority need categories.

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